Tennis Wimbledon

Title puts Sampras among the greats

Stephen Bierley

WHEN Goran Ivanisevic won the first set against Pete Sampras last Sunday it seemed a clear and untroubled day might have finally dawned for the unpredictable but thoroughly congenial Croatian who enters every match with the hazard lights flashing, warning of his own potential for self-destruction.

Had he been facing anyone other than the multi-titled and multi-talented American he might have won his first Grand Slam and made it third time lucky on Centre Court after the disappointment of losing the 1992 and 1994 finals. But it was not to be, and great was the sadness both for Ivanisevic and the crowd.

This was Sampras's fifth Wimbledon singles title, equalling the open-era record of Bjorn Borg. It also places him alongside Borg and Rod Laver with 11 Grand Slam titles in total, one behind the record 12 of Roy Emerson.

Yet for all his achievements and his supreme ability, the Centre Court crowd have never completely warmed to Sampras. Perhaps he simply lacks the vulnerability that makes Ivanisevic so endearing, although on this occasion Sampras was some way short of invincibility.

These have been a difficult 12 months for him. A little of the desire has deserted him, and he has struggled to motivate himself even for those tournaments he holds most dear, namely the Grand Slams. Since beating France's Cédric Pioline at Wimbledon last year he has failed to reach the semi-finals in New York, Melbourne and Paris.

"I've been a little bit burned out, but Wimbledon is always where it happens for me," Sampras said after his fifth win in six years. He recognises the huge tradition of these championships and admits always to feeling more nervous before a Wimbledon final than anywhere else.

In his previous four victories you would have been hard pressed to notice the least sign of anxiety, but it was readily apparent when the great British summer attempted to revive itself before sulking back beneath more grey cloud.

Ivanisevic sensed the great man was not quite himself. "He wasn't playing well. It was not the greatest tennis, but this was my best chance to win. This was not the Pete of 1994."

Such knowledge made this five-set defeat, by 6-7, 7-6, 6-4, 3-6, 6-2, even harder for the Croatian to come to terms with. At the end he sat on his chair, his head swathed in a towel, his body comatose save for the gentle tapping of his left foot.

The crowd desperately wanted to share his grief and lift him, urging him to echo Sampras's lap of triumph. But Ivanisevic could not be untrue to his swirling inner emotions; this was no time for false bravado. All he managed was one final departing wave in acknowledgment of the prolonged and heartfelt sympathetic applause.

He will replay two shots in his head for many weeks to come. Twice in the second-set tie-break he had set points on Sampras's second serve, and twice he drove weak backhands into the net. He will rue them to the end of his career should a Grand Slam forever elude him.

Sampras knew he had been a little fortunate, but the truism that champions make their own luck cannot be denied, because champions act instead of reacting, and when the world No 1 — a position he secured by winning — broke Ivanisevic in the third set it appeared the end might come rather quickly.

Rarely, once he has his teeth in an opponent's throat, does Sampras loosen his grip. But he could do nothing when Ivanisevic easily took the fourth set.

But Sampras, given his own implacable mental strengths in the face of adversity, was always the favourite to win the fifth set, and seized upon an errant Ivanisevic service game with something close to bestial zeal. Croatian blood was on the court and Sampras attacked with savagery to triumph.



Made for each other . . . Sampras after his fifth win PHOTO: DAVE CAULKIN

It's Novotna's day at last

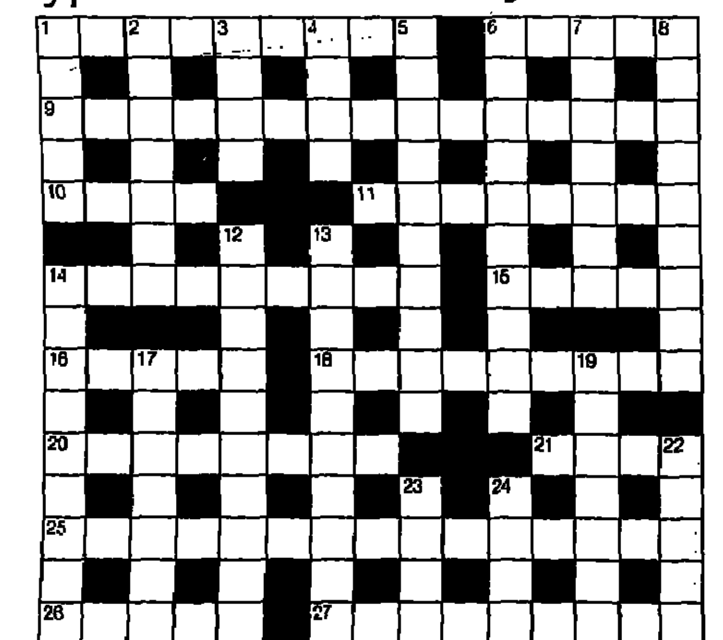
MARTINA NAVRATILOVA, nine times the Wimbledon singles champion, once said of Monica Seles: "If she had Steffi Graf's serve, we'd all be gone." And surely if Jana Novotna had Graf's nerve, her first Grand Slam title would have come long before last Saturday's agonisingly tense 6-4, 7-6 victory over France's Nathalie Tauziat, *writes Stephen Bierley*.

This was a memorable rather than an outstanding ladies' final, because it was simply drenched with too much emotion to ignite more than spasmodically as a genuine contest. The French woman had won three of their four meetings, although they had never before played on grass — the Czech's favourite surface.

However, Tauziat's forcing backhand and her ability to volley instinctively made it improbable that Novotna would be able to dominate from the net, and it was apparent from her opening service game that the Czech's nerves might yet again be her downfall. However, Novotna broke her opponent's service twice in taking the first set.

In the second, Novotna served for the match at 5-4 but what appeared to be a winning smash on the first point was called out and soon after Tauziat was back on level terms. However, in the tie-break a netted backhand volley signalled the beginning of the end for the Frenchwoman and the chance for Novotna to escape her past.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

1 Showman gives former partner greeting with gold piece (9)
6 Pain in the tail? (5)
9 Associate of the Senate House about now, a small-time saint (15)
10,4 Listen to the row getting more cordial? (8)
11 Paduan architect, a boy in the Sienese race (8)
14 Proletarian circle has a number held by a large dose of weedkiller (9)
15 The road to the left is muddy (5)
16 Part of the interior of Troy, they say (5)
18 Unhappy lover keeps changing tune — and he wasn't pressed (9)
20 Cook buys lard without reason (8)
21 The middle came after dark (4)
25 6 across, secret part of card-game (10,5)
26 Servitude left to countryman (5)
27 Greek poet is returning on Monday the 13th (9)

Down

1 The planet needs a change of heart (5)
2 Fashionable city for sitter (3,4)
3 Food causing complaint (4)
4 See 10
5 President raised hat like a cat's claws (10)
6 Colony gets money for subsidence (10)
7 Heat-resistant alloy from French interior is an alien entrant (7)
8 Fuel store cut having had longer life (3-6)
12,13 9 in the slammer, corrective all needed (10,10)
14 Oily rag to be used outside church, a rule hated by 14 across (9)
17 Psychologist's view about Pole — the other one raised silk in the past (7)
19 Sooty tern — which part came first? — sounds so Anglo-Saxon (3-4)
22 Reportedly looks for men called Singh (5)
23 6 across gets water repellents put up (4)
24 6 across in the past cut short with pole-axe (4)

Last week's solution

G	O	A	L	P	O	S	T	S			O	M	I	T
A		C		R		H		N		T		I		I
M	O	T	T	O		A	N	O	P	H	E	L	E	S
E		O		P		L		W		E		O		A
C	O	N	T	R	O	L		M	O	S	S	M	A	N
O				I		O		A		E		E		E
C	O	R	R	E	S	P	O	N	D	E	N	T		
K		E		T						S		E		P
		V	E	R	A	D	U	C	K	W	O	R	T	H
B		O		E		E		A		E				A
A	T	L	A	S	E	S		M	E	D	D	L	E	R
L		V		S		K		B		D		O		I
B	E	E	F	E	A	T	E	R		I	R	O	N	S
O		R		S		O		E		N		F		E
A	P	S	E			P	A	L	S	G	R	A	V	E

Rugby Union International: S Africa 18 England 0

Woodward fears the axe

Robert Armstrong in Cape Town

CLIVE WOODWARD fears for his future. The England coach believes a hostile group of Rugby Football Union members are lobbying for his dismissal due to his scathing criticism of the southern hemisphere tour.

Woodward's anxieties may be related more to his own win-loss ratio than his recent damning reference to the "thick-heads" of the RFU. Since his appointment 10 months ago the England coach has guided his team to three wins in 15 games, the kind of failure rate that tends to prompt changes in personnel.

The fact that England's "tour from hell" has been made with, in effect, a B squad of relatively inexperienced players, 16 first-choice men being injured or unavailable, is bound to count in Woodward's favour, though arguably he did not get the best from limited resources. In some ways England's defeat here was their most impressive performance, certainly in terms of commitment and organisation; at least their 76-0 defeat by Australia seemed in comparison merely a bad dream.

If Woodward were to go, John Mitchell, the assistant coach who has won the respect of the players, would be the most likely replacement given a shortage of credible candidates both at home and abroad. However, Mitchell and the RFU would have to negotiate his release from a long-term contract with Sale.

Whether the progressive-minded Woodward has guarded his back with sufficient care must be open to doubt. Like his main RFU supporters, Fran Cotton and Cliff Brittle, he has a talent for making political enemies that frequently overshadows his creative value to English rugby.

It may be difficult to convince the RFU hawks that Woodward's record has more merit than statistics might suggest. Apart from this game, in which fluent movement was impossible due to torrential rain, England have tried to play ball in hand, developing a fresh style that gives expression to the skills of a young, enthusiastic squad. Static set-piece rugby has been banished.

Perhaps Woodward's greatest achievement has been his willingness to fast-track promising youngsters. The latest example, Paul Sampson, the 20-year-old Wasps wing, will have benefited greatly from making his debut against the Springboks. Josh Lewsey, the 23-year-old fly-half, is another who has had to grow up quickly in his three Tests.

Nick Mallett, the Springbok coach, put a brave face on his side's plodding performance. "England were lucky they did not meet us on a dry pitch, otherwise we would have put 50 points on them," he declared.

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Hashimoto quits after poll rebuff

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

THE Japanese prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, announced this week that he would resign in the wake of a damning judgment by voters on his efforts to drag the world's second-largest economy out of recession. The ruling Liberal Democratic party immediately began the search for a successor to fill the power vacuum.

Twelve hours after election results for the upper house of parliament confirmed big losses for the LDP, Mr Hashimoto announced he was resigning as party president, the first step to standing down as prime minister. "Our failure in the election is my responsibility," he told a press conference. "I did not have enough ability."

The LDP's factions will spend all week choosing his successor. The decision will be made at a meeting of party legislators early next week. Among the favourites are the foreign minister, Keizo Obuchi; the maverick health minister, Junichiro Koizumi; and the former chief cabinet secretary, Seiroku Kajiyama.

Analysts said none of the candidates had the charisma, leadership and grasp of economics needed to pull Japan out of its slump. "The new leader must be up to world standards," said Yasunori Sone, professor of political science at Keio University. "But there is no appropriate person now in the LDP."

"Considering the severe condition of the economy, a political vacuum must be avoided," said Takashi Imai, head of the Japan Federation of Economic Organisations, a powerful business lobby.

Key elements of the government's programme have been delayed by the sudden fall of Mr Hashimoto, who a year ago was riding high in the opinion polls.

As long as the LDP retains a majority in the lower chamber, there is no immediate threat of a change of government. But its disastrous showing in last Sunday's election means it will struggle to pass bills through the upper house, which can delay legislation for 60 days.

Such concerns sent the Japanese currency and the Tokyo Stock Exchange on a roller-coaster ride on Monday, with the yen and stock prices falling sharply in the morning, before recovering later.

At Monday's press conference Mr Hashimoto said he was cancelling a trip to the United States and France, where he was to discuss measures to deal with the Asian financial crisis. "It would be impolite to visit these countries now that I am quitting," he said.

Measures to stimulate the economy and stabilise the teetering banking system have also been put on the back burner. Of greatest concern is legislation for the "bridge banks" scheme to deal with collapsed financial institutions, due to be introduced in parliament this month.

Political and market analysts said the high turnout of voters, which at 60 per cent was up by a third from the last upper house election, signalled that the LDP could not continue to put off measures to tackle the worst recession since the war.

The main benefactor of the upsurge of voter interest was the newly formed Democratic party of Japan, which won 27 of the 126 seats being contested, in its first election.

The party's leader, Naoto Kan, who is unusual for a Japanese politician in having no links to either the bureaucracy or the trade union movement, is now in a strong position to challenge Mr Hashimoto's successor.

Few Tokyo citizens had any sympathy with Mr Hashimoto. "Of course he should resign," said Mayuri Sakurai, an insurance clerk who has seen her bonus plunge 30 per cent this year because of the slump. "Like anyone else, he has to be judged by results. And the results have been terrible."

Comment, page 12



Crowds in the Champs-Elysées celebrate France's 3-0 World Cup victory over Brazil PHOTO: YVES HERMAN

France unites to celebrate World Cup win

MORE THAN a million people turned the Champs-Elysées into a sea of jubilant tricolores on Monday as they cheered a triumphant multi-ethnic football team that looks like changing the self-image of France, *writes Paul Webster in Paris*.

As the players from the country's winning World Cup squad rode through the crowds on the top deck of a bus, taking turns to kiss the trophy, commentators saw the nationwide celebrations as a sign of hope for more tolerance towards immigrants. The rightwing National Front found itself forced to re-think its racist strategy in recognition of the fact that barely half the team the country is celebrating is white.

The vast crowd's loudest applause was reserved for Zinedine Zidane, the brilliant match-winning midfielder who is the son of a *harki* — an Algerian who came to France after fighting against independence.

His face and name had been beamed on to that most nationalistic of Parisian monuments, the Arc de Triomphe, and some newspapers said the national team's multi-racial "fraternity" reflected the ideals of the 1789 Revolution, celebrated this week on Bastille Day.

The popular acclaim for *les bleus* has sent the Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin, and the Gaullist president, Jacques Chirac — both known for tolerance of racial integration — soaring in opinion polls.

On the streets of Paris the pride in having seen a mixed-race team win France's first World Cup was almost as strong as the thrill of victory.

"This shows the entire world that a team from all different origins can work together in a strong and coherent unit," said Thierry, a Parisian fan.

Match report, page 32

Austria	AS30	Malta	60c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

100,000 win right to UK citizenship

Ian Black

NEARLY 100,000 residents of the remnants of empire — from Bermuda to the Pitcairn Islands — are to be granted full British citizenship without having to accept that Britons have the reciprocal right to settle in their homelands.

Under an agreement in principle reached between key ministers, the people of the last colonies will finally win the right to live and work in Britain and to travel without visas in the European Union.

But there is to be no parallel right for mainland British nationals to move freely to what are called the Dependent Territories — whether a wealthy Caribbean paradise such as the Cayman Islands or a poorer one such as Anguilla. The colonies insist on retaining strict immigration controls to avoid being swamped.

The outcome will be very welcome in the worst-off colonies — remote St Helena, Napoleon's last exile in the middle of the Atlantic, and ash-covered Montserrat, the Caribbean island where a volcano has forced the population to flee.

Citizenship was the toughest nut to crack in Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's review of the 13 far-flung outposts left under the Union flag. All 10 inhabited territories wanted British citizenship, though the poorer ones need it much more than the rich. But all strongly opposed the principle of reciprocity demanded by the Home Office.

Agreement was reached months ago on bringing homosexual rights, criminal law, financial services, and anti-drugs policies into line with British and EU standards.

Currently all but Gibraltar and the Falklands — largely white, claimed by other countries, and excluded from the review — have the status of British Dependent Territories. This is tantamount to colonial status, but does not carry the right to live and work in Britain.

Mr Cook found a precedent in the special treatment given to the Falklanders after their islands' liberation from Argentine occupation in 1982. They were granted UK citizenship without having to return the favour.

According to figures collated by the Dependent Territories Association (DTA), about 100,000 people are eligible for British citizenship.

Few people are expected to take up UK citizenship, least of all in Bermuda, the Caymans and the British Virgin Islands — which are all rich in banks and have a combined population of 66,000.

About 11,000 people from Montserrat made homeless by the volcano are already in Britain, leaving 23,000 people to benefit from the long-awaited change of status.

Spread of Aids exposes poverty of current policy

THE Geneva Aids conference showed that two decades into the epidemic — which rivals the Black Plague — infection rates are still rising (Aids research given a boost, July 5). More than 33 million people are now infected. Child mortality rates in Africa are expected to double in five years due to the spread of Aids, offsetting all gains in child survival since the 1950s.

The reason public health efforts have failed to control the epidemic is that the role of poverty in the spread of Aids has been overlooked in favour of medical and scientific research. As a result, affluent countries with a small minority of the world's Aids patients now have treatments and care available. However, more than 90 per cent of infected people live in developing countries, where 800 million people do not even have access to clean water, much less health care.

The real answer to the Aids problem is to focus on the preconditions to basic human well-being. The United Nations has calculated that for \$35-\$40 billion per year, "basic social services" could be provided to all the poorest people on the planet. This includes primary schooling (\$3-\$6 billion), basic health care and nutrition (\$11-\$13 billion), reproductive health and family planning (\$11-\$12 billion), and low-cost clean water and sanitation (\$5-\$6 billion).

Meanwhile we have spent billions on Aids research and treatments. According to one estimate, making the standard Aids treatment available worldwide would cost \$36.5 billion. In other words, the total budget needed to provide "basic social services" for all could be consumed just treating Aids alone, and still not address the underlying social causes of the spiralling growth of the epidemic.
Blaise Salmon,
Vancouver, Canada

WITH news from the Geneva Aids conference that African infection rates in some cases have reached 25 per cent of the population, we in the rich nations should be ashamed. Basic morality aside, the West is obviously underestimating the financial implications of ignoring poverty and disease.

What is the First World doing to terminate such a gross disparity in health and wealth? World leaders need to commit now to aggressive Aids prevention and vaccine programmes. And we need to mobilise the political will of all nations to eliminate the absolute poverty that accelerates a progression of disease, death and destruction of sustainable communities around the globe.
Karen Hodgson,
Victoria, BC, Canada

Squaring up with the euro

MARTIN WALKER bemoans the exclusion of the euro in United States-led bailouts of other national economies (Global economy can't bank on euro, July 5). This ought to be a point of pride. The bailouts may not have been necessary (to the extent that it is at all necessary to socialise costs of high-risk loans) if the US had not succeeded in preventing a Japanese-led bailout of the region last November, effectively pulling the trigger on a loaded gun.

In November Japan took steps to create a regional bailout fund that was intended to support other East Asian countries through their financial crises. The Clinton administration moved quickly to prevent this fund from being established and insisted that the bailouts be handled by the International Monetary Fund (ie, terms more amenable to US investors and its economic policy).

If Japan had been allowed to establish this fund the other East Asian nations would have received the short-term infusion of capital needed to sustain their economies through the crisis, without having to accept IMF austerity plans. Japan's economy would have even received a boost, since the money provided to these nations would have stimulated Japan's exports and overall growth. Instead, the whole region is mired in a severe economic downturn, and large portions of the Indonesian and Thai populations have been pushed to the edge of starvation.

In a similar vein, recent coverage has noted that in Korea financial markets appear to have stabilised somewhat, even though the economy is slipping into a severe recession, with the unemployment rate already having risen to 6.7 per cent. Other articles note that Japan's continued slump, and the resulting decline in the yen, is having a negative impact on the rest of the region. As a result of the decline in the value of the yen, Japanese goods become relatively cheaper in world markets and it becomes more difficult for exports from Korea, Indonesia, and Thailand to compete.

While the department of finance in Canada tries its best to imitate US policy, the euro and its communities have a chance to promote a more humane financial order (three countries' financial systems lie in ruins and the poverty that accompanies this is inestimable). You ought to be proud of that.
Simon Archer,
Toronto, Canada

No divide in East Timor

YOUR recent coverage of the visit by European Union officials to East Timor included reports of pro-Indonesia or pro-integration demonstrations (Indonesian agents shoot Dili protester, July 5). It is important to realise that such protests are not expressions of the will of the East Timorese, but a weapon of oppression and violence used by the Indonesians.

These protests are staged by the Indonesian armed forces. The Timorese present are generally either public servants told that they will lose their jobs if they don't attend, or farmers brought in from the countryside either by force or through trickery. Any clashes between "rival" protesters are instigated by Indonesian military thugs.

Reporting these protests uncritically gives credence to the myth that there is popular support in East Timor for integration with Indonesia. This lie has been used by the Indonesian government to justify their continuing occupation and acts of genocide in East Timor. In fact, no widespread popular support for Indonesian rule of the country exists or has ever existed in East Timor. In the elections held before the Indonesian invasion, the two main parties both supported independence.

And despite the repeated claims by Indonesia that the Timorese are divided on the issue of their future, today both major political parties, the students in Timor and the guerrillas, are united under one leadership that demands a referendum in East Timor. After all, if the Indonesians are so sure that the majority of East Timorese support integration, why are they so afraid of a UN-supervised referendum?
Dan Nicholson,
University Students for East Timor,
Melbourne, Australia

Cross-country prejudice

GARY YOUNGE'S European experiences (On a journey through borders of hate, June 28) rang true. I was a participant in youth orchestra tours to Austria and Germany in the summers of 1987 and 1988 (while completing my sixth form at a London comprehensive school). As was the norm with such tours, the party travelled on a group passport. This didn't prevent the officials at the Austrian and German borders paying particular attention to those members of our party whose skin colour betrayed their Afro-Caribbean heritage. On a separate school excursion to the then Soviet Union, the only people who weren't waved through passport/baggage control at Sheremetyevo airport (Moscow) were those with Jewish-sounding surnames, despite their British documents.

Closer to home, one of my classmates explained that his father "voted conservative, but would vote for the National Front if only they stood a chance of winning". I wasn't sure if I should be thankful for the huge majority enjoyed by my then local MP, Norman Tebbit. I'm glad I wasn't; the electoral support enjoyed by Pauline Hanson in Queensland and other parts of Australia demonstrates how dangerous such comments are, even if (as Younge points out) we "understand them".

The complacency and ignorance of those who accept, and then support, the xenophobic pronouncements of politicians such as Ms Hanson, Jean Marie Le Pen and their ilk, cannot be dismissed as people's democratic right to freedom of speech. John Howard, the Australian prime minister, has tried that approach in the hope that Ms Hanson would run out of things to say and people to scare. The political insecurity that currently grips Mr Howard's government can be directly linked to this myopic course of action.

The rights to freedom of speech, association, expression and education are enjoyed by a minority in this world. It is shameful that the people who take such rights for granted cannot perceive how lucky they are. Younge's article illustrates how the bigotry that lies beneath the veneer of civility inevitably leads to the loss of these rights.

As a white Anglo-Saxon, I can only offer my sincere apologies to Gary Younge and the countless others who suffer such indignities every day. As a research scientist just commencing my career, I can also assure you that I will never work in Queensland while "Pauline Hanson's One Nation party" influences the politics of that state, and I will certainly take steps to leave this country if they ever hold power in the federal arena.
(Dr) Derek Oliver,
Canberra, Australia

Briefly

IT IS difficult to guess from which part of Prague Ian Traynor pens his correspondence (June 28). The statement that "it was the first time since the democratic era began in 1989 that [Czech] voters preferred the centre-left to the centre-right" is simply wrong, as Traynor would have realised if he had added up the results correctly, and had possessed some knowledge of the parties involved. The Christian Democrats and the Freedom Union are considered to be to the right, as is the Civic Democratic party. The Social Democrats are generally seen as being to the left, along with the Communists.

The most disappointing aspect of this piece is the glaring omission of the most heartening result of the elections. The extremist far-right Czech party, which had won seats in the last elections, was shut out of parliament this time around.
Jiri Siler,
Roberta Silerova,
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

MARY MATHESON'S article on Peace Brigades International (July 5) fails to mention that such protection, though it is laudable, is short-term whereas vendettas and recriminations in Colombia are known to occur years after the so called "offender" has stepped down from public life or changed his occupation. Such people remain under threat for the rest of their lives. If the international community wishes to help, it should support those civic and business leaders who are trying valiantly to reverse the trends and bring some sanity to the deserving people of Colombia.
R Thomas,
Cali, Colombia

WHY WAS the news that the Taliban have closed 100 private schools for girls in Afghanistan relegated to the margins of page 3 (June 28). It is revolting that the UN has so far been unable to negotiate for the respect of women's elementary rights in so many countries, particularly in Afghanistan.
Brigitte Carcenac de Torne,
Sydney, Australia

THERE has been a great deal of outrage in the West about Iraq's nuclear arsenal and the nuclear tests in India and Pakistan. Will no one ask the United States, Britain and other Western powers to make a complete and truthful declaration about their own nuclear and chemical weapon arsenals? And does no one in the West remember France's nuclear tests? At least India and Pakistan carried out the tests in their own countries.
Paul Caspersz,
H K Wanninayake,
Kandy, Sri Lanka

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Abiola's sudden death rocks Nigeria

Alex Duval Smith in Lagos and Mark Tran in New York

SPORADIC ethnic rioting continued in Lagos this week following the death of Chief Moshood Abiola last week. The man widely believed to have won Nigeria's last democratic election died of a heart attack after collapsing in front of a delegation sent from Washington to win his freedom from jail.

Abiola started coughing heavily in the presence of the United States under-secretary of political affairs, Thomas Pickering, and Susan Rice, assistant secretary of state for Africa. His death came less than a month after the equally dramatic death of his jailer, the military dictator Sani Abacha — also said officially to have died of cardiac arrest.

In parts of Nigeria's main city mobs of young men attacked shops owned by northerners — the Hausa-speaking area from which the country's rulers come. Abiola was a Yoruba from the south.

The day after Abiola's death the country's new military leader, General Abdusalam Abubakar, disbanded the secretive inner cabinet that rubber-stamped some of the worst abuses of Abacha's regime. But the move failed to quell the discontent sparked by the death of the country's most prominent political prisoner.

Gen Abubakar appealed for calm and said Abiola had been on "the brink of his release from detention" when he died. Abiola had been detained since 1994 for declaring himself president on the basis of an annulled 1993 election he is widely believed to have won.

"For me personally, and for the nation at large, this must be one of the saddest moments of our life," said Gen Abubakar, who succeeded Abacha after his death on June 8.

Last weekend, after days of rumour that Abiola had been poisoned, a team of international pathologists said his death was due to natural causes — heart disease following a history of hypertension. In a preliminary statement they said: "In our opinion the mechanism of death was a rapid deterioration in a disease of the heart." The team ruled out foul play.

Abiola was finally buried last Saturday at his home in the Ikeja district of Lagos.

In a hesitant signal of reform following Abiola's death, the ruling military council cancelled six death sentences passed in connection with a coup plot to topple Abacha. But the move, after lengthy deliberations, is likely to disappoint campaigners who had been hoping for the release of Nigeria's remaining 200 political prisoners.

The council also postponed a final decision on restoring democracy and said a small working group would report to Gen Abubakar in a few days' time. Rear-Admiral Victor Ombu told reporters that Gen Abubakar would make a broadcast this week.

An official statement said Abacha's former deputy, Lieutenant-General Oladipo Diya, and two of the other convicted plotters had had their sentences cut to 25 years in prison, while three more death sentences were commuted to 20-year terms.

The six were sentenced in April by a special military tribunal following a plot to topple Abacha in December 1997. Ten people sentenced for lesser roles in the plot had their sentences reduced.

Pro-democracy campaigners met on Monday to decide what to do if Gen Abubakar backtracks on his pledge to move toward civilian rule. The general has stated that he wants to maintain Abacha's programme for a transition to civilian rule by October 1. But few pro-democracy campaigners within Nigeria believe this will happen. They remain cynical even though Gen Abubakar has released about 30 political prisoners.

The main two pro-democracy alliances — the National Democratic Coalition (Nadeco) and the Joint Action Committee of Nigeria (Jacon) — have not yet agreed on co-ordinated action. Nadeco has held talks with Gen Abubakar whereas Jacon has refused to do so until the remaining political prisoners — an estimated 200 — are released.

In recent days Jacon supporters outside Abiola's home have held banners calling for an independent state for the Yoruba tribe, dominant in Lagos and the southwest.

But political parties are thoroughly discredited. When elections are held, Nigerians do not vote. The national assembly elections on April 25 had a 1 per cent turnout.

Most democracy campaigners are alarmed by the tribal divisions that have re-emerged since Abiola's death. In a country that has 250 tribes and as many languages, some fear a new Biafran war — the conflict in which hundreds of thousands died in the east of the country between 1967 and 1970.

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Mourners arrive at Abiola's graveside led by his son Kola (in Abiola T-shirt) PHOTOGRAPH: SEYLLOU DIALLO

The Week

VOLKSWAGEN, Europe's biggest car maker, reversed decades of stonewalling about its activities during the second world war and agreed to compensate slave labourers who survived working in its factories in Northern Germany.

THE centrist mayor of Quito, Jamil Mahuad, defeated a populist banana magnate, Alvaro Noboa, in the second-round of Ecuador's presidential elections, according to exit polls.

CHINA has released four of nine dissidents detained for trying to set up an opposition party last month.

AN INVESTIGATION has been launched into problems at Hong Kong's new \$21 billion airport. Five days after it began operating, freight shipments were in chaos and foreign travel agencies were threatening to take their business elsewhere.

SILVIO Berlusconi, the former Italian prime minister, was sentenced to two years in prison for illegal party financing. Last week he received a three-year term for for bribing tax inspectors.

THE Belarus president, Alexander Lukashenko, was refused a visa to travel to European Union countries. The ban follows the president's decision to close down ambassadorial residences in Minsk.

AN Italian judge dismissed the case against the crew of the US army jet that sliced a cable ski-lift in the Alps in February, killing 20 people. The US claims jurisdiction in the case.

HUTU rebels killed 34 people in an attack on Tare village, 30km north of the Rwandan capital, Kigali.

ALGERIA'S security forces say they have killed a notorious leader of the Islamist GIA, Athmane Khelifa, in a battle just outside Algiers.

A NEW York jury ruled that the black activist and politician Ray Sharpton and two others defamed a former prosecutor, Steven Pagones, by accusing him of rape.

CROSSING the North Pole will become as routine as crossing the Atlantic from next year when Russia opens its Arctic airspace to foreign flights, resulting in dramatic savings in time and money for travellers from Europe and North America to Asia.

ASIA'S population of sea horses has declined alarmingly because of growing demand for their use in traditional medicines, aphrodisiacs and aquariums, conservationists said.

UN Security Council warns Israel on plans for Jerusalem

Anthony Goodman in New York

THE Security Council has told Israel not to act on its decision to extend the boundaries of Jerusalem, but the Jewish state says the United Nations cannot intervene.

In a statement issued on Monday, the council also called on Israel "not to take any other steps which would prejudice the outcome of the permanent status negotiations" with the Palestinians, due to be completed next May. The council served notice that it would "keep Israeli actions under review".

Reacting to the council statement, David Bar-Illan, adviser to the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said: "What Israel has done in Jerusalem is purely a municipal matter. There was no room for any intervention by an international body."

"The statement was a follow-up to a council debate on June 30, when more than 40 speakers criticised the Israeli plan to expand Jerusalem's boundaries. They said that it would extend an "umbrella authority" over nearby Israeli settlements in the West Bank, change the population balance in the Holy City and endanger the already faltering Middle East peace process.

Israel said the shift in Jerusalem's boundaries was aimed at bolstering its economy and infrastructure and would apply strictly to areas west of the city, within the pre-1967 war lines.

For the past two weeks the United States and the Palestinian UN observer delegation have been negotiating on a resolution or a statement. Though a resolution carries more weight, it is subject to a vote and possibly a veto. A statement only requires the concurrence of all 15 council members. —*Reuters*

Washington Post, page 14

Guerrillas now key to peace plan for Kosovo

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE international powers moved to integrate Kosovo Liberation Army guerrillas into the search for peace in the Serbian province of Kosovo last week, and revealed for the first time that they were drafting proposals for a form of home rule for the ethnic Albanian majority.

Meeting in Bonn, senior officials from the Contact Group — United States, Russia, Germany, France, Italy and Britain — conceded that the KLA was now such a significant factor in the conflict that it had to be included in negotiations.

But the Contact Group also threatened to stifle the guerrillas' gun-running and fund-raising activities abroad if they spurned ceasefire efforts as a prelude to negotiating a settlement restoring the autonomy that was enjoyed by Kosovo for 15 years until it was dissolved by President Slobodan Milosevic of rump Yugoslavia in 1989.

"We have a situation today where the KLA has become an extraordinarily important force on the ground in Kosovo, controlling 30 per cent of the territory by day and probably more by night," a senior US official said. "Fully-fledged war has virtually become apparent."

Wolfgang Ischinger, the political director of the German foreign office, said: "We now have a new situation, especially because of the role of the militant Albanians, the KLA."

The statement from the Contact Group amounted to the first de facto recognition of the KLA as a player in Kosovo and represented a blow to Ibrahim Rugova, the elected pacifist leader of the ethnic Albanians.

The Contact Group stressed that Mr Rugova remained the main interlocutor in the stalled negotiations, but noted that "the Albanian team for all these talks must be fully representative of their community in order to speak authoritatively".

"That's obvious code for including someone who can deliver the KLA vote," a Western diplomat said.

Yeltsin wins $11bn emergency loan

James Meek in Moscow

THE International Monetary Fund agreed this week to give Russia an emergency loan of $11 billion, digging into its dwindling reserves in an effort to prevent a catastrophic devaluation of the rouble.

The IMF will make $11.2 billion of new money available by the end of the year. Russia's debt ambassador, Anatoly Chubais, said that with other IMF, World Bank and Japanese government credits added Russia would get $22.6 billion over two years.

But even if the stable rouble, a rare economic gain of the Boris Yeltsin years, is protected, the new loan may not repair the damage done to the president's authority by the financial crisis.

On Monday one of Mr Yeltsin's favourite provincial governors, Dmitri Ayatskov, renounced him, and predicted that the president would resign by September. "Here we are again, wearing holes in the knees of our trousers, grovelling to the IMF for another loan," said Mr Ayatskov, the governor of Saratov region and a self-styled champion of reform.

Russia has been in talks with the IMF and foreign governments for an emergency rouble stabilisation fund since May, when overseas speculators began a flight from the country's bond markets — threatening to drain hard currency reserves, bring down the rouble and destroy the banking system.

Negotiations were hard. The IMF is short of funds after bailing out Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand as a result of the Asian financial crisis, which sparked off Russia's own problems. After the Russian loan it is not clear how the fund will stop the next financial domino falling.

The IMF was wary of encouraging "moral hazard" — a euphemism for loan-sharking to a desperately poor country with a gigantic arsenal of nuclear weapons, on the assumption that richer countries would not dare let its financial system collapse.

Most importantly, there was the concern that Mr Yeltsin lacked the will to back his new prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, against the powerful business interests that resent obeying the same tax and competition laws as ordinary Russians.

Mr Yeltsin and Mr Kiriyenko now have much to prove — first, to get the government's crisis measures through a reluctant parliament, and then to bring the budget deficit under control.

"The measures proposed by the Russian government and the central bank are supported by the international financial community," Mr Chubais said on Monday. "This is not about patching holes or putting out fires. This is an integral set of measures aimed at stabilising the financial markets, supporting the rouble and balancing the budget."

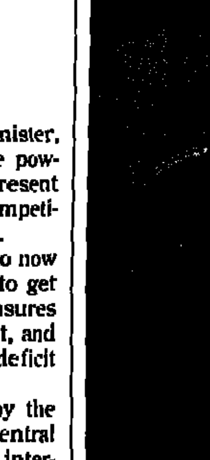
An IMF representative, John Odling-Smee, said the loan would still have to be approved by the fund's board next week, and would be paid out only after the crisis measures were put into effect.

In Washington the White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, said the United States strongly supported the agreement, and urged Congress to "stop whining" and approve delayed US contributions to the IMF's coffers.

Unlike previous loans, which have helped bring Russia's debt burden up to the $200 billion mark, the latest money is not designed to be spent, but to give investors reassurance that their rouble funds and profits are safe from sudden devaluation.

In a sign of the security the government believes the loan brings, Mr Chubais announced that Russia would stop issuing high-interest rouble bonds, a kind of government IOU known as GKOs. This way of financing the deficit made a small number of overseas investors extremely rich.

Mr Ayatskov's outburst was only the latest sign that the president's grip on power is not secure. In Siberia, miners demanding Mr Yeltsin's resignation continued blocking railways. Among the trains stranded was one carrying enriched uranium for a nuclear power plant.





President Mandela meets Mabel Nxumalo, a woman whose son was among five people shot dead at the weekend in the town of Richmond, in KwaZulu-Natal province PHOTOGRAPH: RAJESH JANTILAL

Plunging rand and violence hit S Africa

John Sweeney in Johannesburg

THE GOOD consequences of the recession in East Asia — knocking the dictator Suharto off his perch in Indonesia — are turned upside down in South Africa with the fall and fall of the rand. The economic fallout threatens the political stability of the new democracy and of the whole region.

Newspaper hoardings proclaim the rand's decline, the shops of the "white flight" zone of northern Johannesburg are running out-of-season sales, and it is impossible to hold a conversation without coming across gloomy talk of the country's imminent financial collapse.

The meltdown of what was, during apartheid, one of the world's strongest currencies has led to a rotting of the soul of white South Africa and takes some of the shine off Nelson Mandela's 80th birthday this week.

The euphoria at his standing in the world is ebbing away in favour of a pessimism hard to square with the fundamentals of what is still one of the richest countries in Africa.

But the rand has crashed below six to the dollar, and this perception of economic decline and the horrific levels of violence in the cities are causing an unproclaimed sea change in mood.

South Africa's psychological depression is, in many ways, an unfair curse on the African National Congress government. Much of the gloom has been occasioned by the world's global recession, which is now battering away at the rand.

Mr Mandela's chosen successor, Thabo Mbeki, will inherit the problems the grand old man rose above. Already Mr Mbeki, who runs the government on a day-to-day basis, is struggling with a 33 per cent unemployment rate while business has to deal with a prime lending rate of 24 per cent. The government's policy, named Gear (Growth, Employment and Redistribution), is grinding to a halt.

As ever, race is the great unspoken factor, these days alluded to in code, but a code anyone can crack. The collapse in the rand — it has fallen by a third since the end of May — has been accelerated, say market watchers, by the announcement that Tito Mboweni will replace Chris Stals as governor of the Reserve Bank in August 1999.

The coded version goes like this: Mr Stals is politically independent, whereas Mr Mboweni is the ANC minister of labour, and therefore potentially susceptible to political pressure. Decoded, Mr Stals is a white Afrikaner; Mr Mboweni is black and calls himself "comrade" to boot.

It cannot help that Mr Stals called for a successor who "must be someone with real banking experience". Mr Mboweni has none.

The sheer scale of South Africa's violence is equally depressing for those who wish the new democracy well. The country suffered an undeclared war for almost 30 years. Any society that goes through a protracted war always has enormous difficulties giving its former soldiers, schooled in the arts of violence, useful work to do.

The result is more "white flight", not from the centres of the cities to the suburbs, but out of South Africa altogether. — *The Observer*

Tribesmen grab power plant in Fiji

Catherine Adams in Suva

THE FIJIAN army is being besieged at spear-point by tribal landowners occupying the country's main hydro-electric power station to back a demand for $16 million from the government for land they lost to the project when it began 15 years ago.

In the trickiest civil disturbance in the South Pacific islands since the military coup of 1987, villagers living around the Monasavu dam have sworn to fight to the death for the "rent" they want. The site supplies 90 per cent of Fiji's electricity.

Two hundred soldiers and riot police are positioned tamely behind roadblocks erected by tribesmen, and allowed into the station only under the escort of barefoot warriors.

"We have the power. We can beat the gun," said Chief Adrea Vasuitoga, spokesman for the area's 3,500 people. "We are going to fight with spears, axes and clubs," he said. Behind him warriors held aloft 3m-long sharpened bamboo spears.

The landowners' occupation of Fiji's most prestigious development project comes as the government is beset by sabotage of the country's crucial sugar cane harvest. Hundreds of tons of cane have been burnt by farmers demanding subsidies following drought, the devaluation of the Fiji dollar and the withdrawal of European Union sugar concessions.

The government has been playing down the Monasavu dispute, insisting that compensation for the villagers was invested for them, and that chiefs agreed to this. Even so, a cabinet sub-committee is reviewing the people's claims and is expected to make a cash offer soon.

One official suggested that the tribesmen may have chosen to press for more money now because an election is coming and because the area has been hit by drought.

But the hardline Fijian nationalist opposition party, Vanua Tako Lavo, said people were ready to "rise up" and overthrow their rulers.

Residents of around 50 villages still not connected to the power supply near their homes say they have not received money promised by the government for leasing their land. Comments attributed to the prime minister, Sitiveni Rabuka, in which he called the landowners "unreasonable", appear to have inflamed the dispute.

"They've waited for years. I do not see why they can't wait a little more," Mr Rabuka was reported to have told a local paper.

Journalists and government officials were initially welcomed by the protesters, and invited into their huts to drink kava, made from plant roots. Now popular in California as a health drug, it is a root ground up to produce a mildly intoxicating drink.

But, increasingly frustrated by events, Chief Vasuitoga is now charging for interviews and warning the government that if it pays anything less than $16 million there will be bloodshed.

"If we die, who's going to fight for this? It's time to make a stand for our kids, for the future," he said.

50,000 volts for talking in court

Martin Kettle in Washington

WHEN Ronnie Hawkins was found guilty of theft in Los Angeles in April, things could hardly have looked worse. The conviction was his third, and under the United States' draconian "three strikes" rule, he faced a sentence of up to 25 years in jail.

But things did get worse when Hawkins came up for sentencing in a Long Beach court this month. As he loudly interrupted the court to complain, the patience of Judge Joan Comparet-Cassani snapped. She asked a court bailiff to pick up a device like a television remote control, point it at Hawkins and press the button.

The bailiff sent an electric shock of 50,000 volts through Hawkins's body for eight seconds, leaving him "stiff as a board", according to one onlooker.

The Los Angeles case is believed to be the first time the so-called stun belt has been used in the Los Angeles court and penal system, and has triggered an angry debate over the use of a device condemned as torture by Amnesty International.

Hawkins had been fitted with the belt because he had been violent in custody and had repeatedly interrupted his earlier trial.

The belt is a 10cm-wide cloth waistband, with a 1kg battery pack attached at the back. It is worn under clothing so as not to attract attention, and activated by a remote control at distances of up to 100 metres. It delivers a shock in the area of the left kidney.

Los Angeles is one of 100 US jurisdictions in 15 states that use the stun belt to control prisoners and defendants. Since it came on the market five years ago, it has been used 27 times, according to the manufacturers Stun-Tech Inc of Ohio — eight of them "accidental".

Jungle talks open way to Colombian peace

Jeremy Lennard in Bogotá

COLOMBIANS had been persuaded that their president-elect was in France to watch the World Cup final. In fact he was tramping through a rainforest for secret talks with leaders of the country's largest guerrilla group.

To prove that his historic encounter with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) was not a hoax, Andreas Pastrana even produced a short video last week showing him in a yellow T-shirt chatting to leaders of the group, which has made war on the state for the past 34 years.

The astonishing meeting produced agreement to start peace talks within 90 days of Mr Pastrana's inauguration on August 7.

"It is the best news Colombia has received for years," said the National Business Council's president, Luis Carlos Villegas, comments echoed by leaders from a broad cross-section of society.

The United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, sent Mr Pastrana a message of congratulations and offered UN help in negotiating an end to the guerrilla war.

Although Mr Pastrana won the election on the promise to make peace, no one expected him to set off with his campaign chief, a security man and cameraman for a secret jungle rendezvous with the rebel leaders Manuel Marulanda and Jorge Briceno. They agreed on the demilitarisation of five municipalities in the south — one of the guerrillas' conditions for taking part in a peace process.

The country's second largest rebel group — the National Liberation Army (ELN) — met Colombian business, social and church leaders in Germany last weekend for exploratory peace talks.

With the two main rebel groups showing their willingness to co-operate with Mr Pastrana — something they have refused to do with his discredited predecessor, Ernesto Samper — there is fresh hope that the country may be moving towards an end to civil war.

But while political analysts welcome Mr Pastrana's "vital step", they warn that lasting peace may be a long way off. As the condition for laying down arms the guerrillas have presented a long list of sweeping political, social and agricultural reforms, and negotiators will have to overcome deep mutual distrust.

The guerrillas, particularly Farc, are in a strong position, having inflicted a long series of embarrassing defeats on the armed forces in recent years. Rebel numbers are growing, and a report last week suggests that Farc has doubled its income in the past four years to $490 million. Financially, the guerrillas are outperforming many of the country's leading businesses.

The increasing involvement of rebels of the right and left in drug trafficking is a further headache for negotiators.

The ELN has promised to cease some military activities — most notably attacks on foreign companies — but it recently sent a reminder that it was not deserting its causes and principles.

In a letter to the British prime minister it reiterated its claim that BP has repeatedly abused human rights in its search for oil. And while the ELN offers to reduce its activity, the Farc has declared as military targets foreign companies exploiting Colombian resources.

Mr Pastrana has acknowledged the uphill struggle he faces in uniting all sides behind a peace initiative. But in the light of the unprecedented meeting and the talks in Germany, there is a new atmosphere of reconciliation and hope.

Russia troops given a diet of dogfood

James Meek in Moscow

THOUSANDS of Russian soldiers have been fed dogfood in place of stew, a team of military investigators has discovered. It is the latest horror story from the country's underfunded and corrupt army.

Staff from the military prosecutors' office checking a warehouse found that a company called Moldinterprodukt had been regularly supplying dogfood disguised as tins of stew.

Kommersant Daily newspaper reported last week that the inspectors found 1,000 tonnes of dogfood, made from processed animal ears, tails and offal. They also found 5 tonnes of fish more than a year past its use-by date.

Although the defence minister, Marshal Igor Sergeyev, has ruthlessly pursued cuts and mergers in the country's sprawling armed forces, he is far short of the funds needed to build new homes for retired officers and re-equip the forces, let alone to feed, pay and supply the troops who remain in service.

Few garrisons bother to pay their electricity and heating bills, because President Boris Yeltsin has made it illegal for the utilities to cut them off. Conscripts begging on the street have become a common sight in Moscow. Every month brings a fresh toll of suicides, murders and violent desertions. As the air force abandons many of its airfields, surplus officers and their families are left in rotting barracks.

In a recent television report from the tense region of Dagestan, near Chechenia, troops talked of engaging in unspecified "commerce" to earn cash to buy fuel.

The demoralised state of the army makes it less likely that it could become the instrument of revolt or repression. It is deeply split between conscripts and junior officers on the one hand, many of whom simply want to escape from the army alive, and the other senior officers alienated from their men by their corruption and incompetence.

More worrying is a breakdown of control that would let weapons and equipment fall into the hands of angry, unpaid communities.

Manila offers deal to split Marcos cash

Claire Wallerstein in Manila

THE government of the Philippines, crippled by the Asian currency crisis, is hoping to bail itself out by striking a controversial deal with the family of Ferdinand Marcos to share the late dictator's illegally hoarded millions.

The country's new president, former screen idol Joseph Estrada, is desperately in need of funds to make good his election campaign promises to help the country's 35 million poor. But with the peso falling 45 per cent in value since last year, the country that once hoped to join Asia's tiger economies is now struggling to meet a $205 million budget deficit and debts of $65 billion.

The administration proposes to split the ill-gotten wealth 75:25 between the government and members of the Marcos family — who still insist the despot made his fortune legitimately through brilliant stock market deals.

It is not known how much money Marcos and his profligate wife Imelda spirited away before they fled during the People Power uprising of 1986. Estimates range as high as $36 billion.

But extensive investigations ordered by the governments of Cory Aquino and Fidel Ramos managed to unearth only $570 million in a Swiss bank account. It is this money that the government is proposing to divide up with the family in an out of court settlement.

A political analyst at the University of the Philippines, Alex Magno, said: "While there is undoubtedly a lot more out there, it's been extremely difficult to find. The fear now is that the government could end up spending more on lawyers' fees than it will ever get back."

The $570 million has been transferred to the Philippine National Bank, but the government can recover it only if a member of the Marcos family is convicted of having amassed the money illegally.

Though Mrs Marcos is appealing against a conviction for corruption in an unrelated case, none of about 200 relevant cases against her has reached court. Mr Estrada, a long-time Marcos ally, talked tough in his inaugural speech, vowing to wipe out cronyism and corruption, but the fortunes of the melodramatic "Iron Butterfly" seem to be on the rise.

"The wheels of justice can turn excruciatingly slowly in this country, and with all the damage done by the currency crisis, the government's now just trying to cut its losses," Mr Magno said.

Mr Estrada, who came to power on June 30, has caused uproar by announcing plans to bury Marcos's embalmed body in Manila's Heroes' Cemetery. The president backed down only after several days of street demonstrations.

He is widely expected to give Mrs Marcos a presidential pardon should the supreme court uphold her conviction for corruption — as a reward for her endorsement after her last-minute withdrawal from the presidential race in May.

If a deal — which eluded the previous administration — is clinched now, Mrs Marcos would also expect to be granted immunity from further lawsuits and prosecution, according to one of her aides. This would leave her free to share the Marcos wealth with her three children, two of whom have won government posts.

"The Marcos family is really beginning to regain its power, and Estrada's close relationship with them worries a lot of people," Mr Magno said. "Even though the country may need the money, the recent burial issue shows there are still many who have not forgotten the martial law years, and will not accept any solution which lets the Marcoses off the hook."



Estrada: negotiating with Imelda

Foremost among these are the 10,000 victims of human rights abuses during the Marcos regime, who have not seen a penny of the $2 billion in compensation they were awarded in 1994 by a court in the United States.

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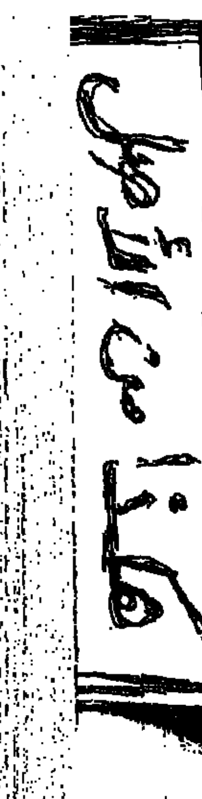
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What the US public doesn't want to know

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

THIRTY-FIVE years after Abraham Zapruder stood at the top of a grassy knoll in Dallas, Texas, with his Bell and Howell Zoomatic camera and shot the film that made him famous, his home movie of President John F Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 is about to go on sale in the United States as a home video.

The appearance this week of the $19.98 video, entitled Image Of An Assassination: A New Look At The Zapruder Film, tells us something about changing attitudes in the United States. For many years after the assassination the most shocking parts of the footage were classified material, which encouraged the conspiracy theorists. The underlying reason for this, however, was straightforward and powerful. Neither the US government nor Time-Life, who had bought the first rights from Zapruder, thought that such scenes should be shown to the public.

With the passing of time, and with the death in 1994 of the former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, such considerations became less relevant. Moreover unauthorised copies of the Zapruder film had begun to appear, and the footage even became the centrepiece of the courtroom scenes in Oliver Stone's powerful, conspiratorial film JFK.

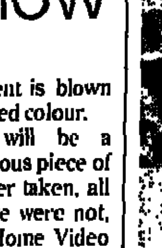
Now, even though Kennedy's children are still alive, the invisible fetters that for so long kept the film away from the eyes of the public have been broken. Soon, you too will be able to sit in the comfort of your living room and watch as the head of the US president is blown apart in digitally enhanced colour.

Presumably, there will be a market for the most famous piece of home movie footage ever taken, all 26-seconds of it. If there were not, then presumably MPI Home Video would not have gone to the effort of preparing 250,000 copies of the 45-minute video which, in addition to the celebrated cine film itself, will contain interviews and a narrative about the history of the 500 or so frames that made the Dallas dress manufacturer, who died in 1970, a household name.

One could score some easy points by attacking the video on the grounds of taste. But it appears that there is no need as only a minority of Americans are likely to rush out and buy it. And it is a reasonable bet, too, that few of the television news channels will do more than report on the release of the video, as a sense of tact and taste is likely to stay their hand.

I say this both with relief and with interest, because tact and taste are not the qualities that are most regularly attributed to the US media in its coverage of the private life of the president these days. On the contrary, if you believe the White House, the media abandoned such qualities long ago, which may explain why they are currently everyone's favourite whipping boy. In many eyes they stand condemned not just of being tasteless and tactless, but of being bad at their job and, quite possibly, corrupt.

Of course the issue of Bill Clinton's sexual travails cannot be compared with the impact Kennedy's assassination had on the nation, but there is a connection between these two moments in American history. The latter was not merely an attack on the life of the US president, but also on the institution of the presidency itself. Clinton's sexual peccadilloes have shaken the presidency too, and his determination to retain his office, perhaps even by lying about his private life, poses a further challenge to the wish of a majority of Americans to believe the best about their leader and the post that he occupies.





On camera . . . a security agent rushes to help the stricken Kennedy in Dallas in 1963

In time, there can be little doubt that Linda Tripp's 20 hours of taped conversations with Monica Lewinsky will be placed on sale to the public, and when they are the US media will doubtless publish every word. (The British media, on the other hand, will remain true to different values and restrict itself to the saucy bits.)

We will not have to wait 35 years for the Tripp tapes either, because the Lewinsky publishing and media industry is a tidal wave waiting to happen. The only question is when it will strike.

But that is not the only question in the minds of Americans, at least as revealed in an opinion poll last week, conducted by Gallup for USA Today and CNN, in which 59 per cent of Americans said that the Tripp tapes should not be made public, 70 per cent said they were not interested in listening to them, and 63 per cent said the investigation into Lewinsky should stop.

This does not mean, the same poll usefully illustrated, that around two-thirds of Americans believe Clinton is telling the truth. In fact only 38 per cent say they would accept Clinton's denials of a sexual relationship with "that woman" if Lewinsky finally says that one existed. Compared with last February, when the scandal was at its height, public opinion has shifted away from believing the president's version and increasingly towards giving the benefit of the doubt to his accusers.

Clinton may well face impeachment before this episode is over. But the public does not think he should. In the poll, indeed, a majority say that he should not be impeached even if he was shown to have lied under oath, which is a criminal act. Americans believe that this whole business is a lot of fuss about nothing, or at least that it is too much fuss about too little wrongdoing.

They also want to believe the best of their president, because they think that they elected a good man — twice — and because they believe that the attacks on him are disproportionate to the demeanour.

Journalists often talk about the public's right to know. The public, on the other hand, is often more concerned to assert its right not to know. It doesn't want to look at the president having his skull smashed into pieces by a bullet, and doesn't want to listen to someone talking about her gropings in the presidential trousers. And who is to say that Americans are wrong in either case?

Austrian diplomacy faces stiff test

Europe this week
Martin Walker

CONVENTIONAL wisdom has it that Austria's six-month tenure of the European presidency, following the end of Britain's term, will be a fairly low-key affair. Presidencies in the second half of the year are truncated by the European holiday months of July and August at one end and the Christmas period at the other. And the difficulty of Europe taking any serious decisions before the results of the German election are known at the end of September has undermined the potential of the Austrian presidency even further.

Moreover Austria's term will be succeeded next January by the German presidency, and Bonn's economic pre-eminence means that crucial decisions on the European Union budget for the next six-year period, and who pays what, will be delayed until it takes over.

Suddenly, however, that conventional wisdom looks flawed. Three important issues are to be tackled this autumn under Austrian leadership, two of them by choice. First, the foreign minister, Wolfgang Schüssel, has decided to beat off attempts to transfer the co-ordinating role between Brussels and the member states away from the General Affairs Council, composed of the EU's 15 foreign ministers, to a new super-body of deputy prime ministers.

Second, Austria has resolved to drive forward the highly contentious issue of tax harmonisation. According to the finance minister, Rudolf Edlinger, Austria wants to secure a common level of corporation tax across the EU economies, and to impose the 20 per cent withholding tax on all bank accounts held by EU citizens in other member states. This is not popular with Luxembourg nor with Britain's Channel Islands, which fear the consequences for their own secretive banking havens.

Harmonised European taxes, which have always been the logical next step after a single market and a single currency, will undermine the investment and entrepreneurial advantages enjoyed by a low-tax regime such as Britain's. By the same token, high-tax regimes such as those of Germany and the Scandinavian countries are all in favour of the Austrian initiative.

The third big issue that looms is not of Austria's making. During the last two meetings of Ecofin, the council of EU finance ministers, the Commission has expressed serious concern that the budget disciplines imposed by the need to qualify for the single currency are slipping.

The financial commissioner, Yves-Thibault de Silguy, has been rebuffed by the ministers on each occasion that he has argued that any new budget surpluses should be used to pay off existing debt, rather than for electorally popular tax cuts or job-creation schemes. The ministers, breathing a collective sigh of relief at having reached the single currency targets, now want to relax the strait-jacket that committed them to reduce budget deficits to 3 per cent of gross domestic product, and to cut overall debt to 60 per cent of GDP.

A battle thus looms between the Commission and the European Central Bank — whose new president Wim Duisenberg warned last week that he feared "an additional strain on monetary policy" — and the more impatient finance ministers. Italy, France, Spain and Belgium appear determined to stand on the rights of national sovereignty and to resist attempts to keep the budget disciplines in place for the foreseeable future. Germany last week appeared to join them when its finance minister, Theo Waigel, ruled out any rise in interest rates "in the near future".

This issue was supposed to have been resolved last year when the German insistence on a Stability Pact to maintain budgetary rigour was matched by a French insistence that such rigour must not be allowed to get in the way of growth. The resulting compromise was the Stability and Growth Pact, which tried to square this circle.

THE Austrian government's own policy document, "Main Themes of the Austrian Presidency", notes that "Austria will be the first member state to have the task of ensuring increased co-ordination of economic policy in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council at Luxembourg". This is an example of the way that bland phrases agreed in the haste and bargaining of an EU summit can later come back to haunt governments. To agree "increased co-ordination of economic policy" sounds vague enough, rather like everyone agreeing to be in favour of motherhood. But in the context of the Commission and Central Bank insisting that EU governments continue to shrink budget deficits, such a bland agreement has powerful implications

At the very least it means peer review. Each of the 15 member states has to present its budget and financial projections for the year and more ahead to the other members, and then be prepared to defend its policies against complaints that deficits are too high or taxes too low, and that such a national policy is irresponsible when set against the common interest. This is already happening in a way that illustrates the degree to which the process of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) is already eroding traditional prerogatives of nation states in charting their own policy course.

"We are already learning to discuss budgets like we do in our national governments," said the Luxembourg prime minister, Jean Claude Juncker, of last week's meeting of the 11 finance ministers in the euro-zone. "It's not a diplomatic conference here." And indeed, the tone was far from diplomatic.

The problem is that an offending government that refuses to discipline its budget deficit cannot be dismissed. Under the terms of the Stability and Growth Pact, such a government can only be hit with swingeing fines. This notional punishment has yet to be tested and nobody dares even consider whether such a sanction could be realistically applied when several or even a majority of member states are breaking the new rules.

Focus of Nigeria's democratic hopes

Moshood Abiola

THE extraordinary life of Moshood Abiola, who has died aged 60, matches the tumultuous pageant of Nigeria's political life in which he played such a pivotal role.

Abiola first came to prominence as an accountant for the United States multinational ITT's Nigerian offshoot, which he joined in 1968. He developed a knack for getting contractual cheques signed by the highest ranking military officers under the 1970s regime of General Murtala Muhammad. This relationship with the military hierarchy both secured Abiola control of ITT's Nigerian operations and gave him the platform to pursue his always flamboyant ambitions.

His direct influence on the political process began with the constitutional conference of the late 1970s. The then military government had lifted the ban on political parties, and Abiola became chairman of the Ogun state branch of the National party of Nigeria in the time of the Second Republic, civilian rule which lasted until the end of 1983.

His political career began to flourish with the launch of his Concord newspaper group in 1980. He hoped it could influence his campaign for presidential nomination within the then ruling National party.

It was in that brief phase of democratic government between 1979 and 1983 that Abiola became a truly public figure — known for his extraordinary generosity in building schools and financing the education of many children of the élite as much as for his penchant for marrying more than the usual numbers of wives allowed by Islamic custom. Tension between the different families of which he was head was something that he later began to regret.

Abiola's ambition never faltered, and when his friend General Ibrahim Babangida took power in 1985 he had access to the innermost machinations of the military as they moved cautiously and uncertainly into the new phase of democratic transition that eventually unfolded in June 1993.

When Abiola won presidential nomination for the Social Democratic Party in 1993 he campaigned convincingly and tirelessly, his "rags to riches" progress serving as an inspiration for ordinary Nigerians across a notoriously ethnically divided nation.

Despite, and more likely because of this popular appeal, Abiola was a threat to others in the military, who prevailed upon Babangida to annul the most democratic presidential election the country had witnessed, in which Abiola won almost 60 per cent of the popular vote. He was potentially the first southerner to hold the presidency in a civilian government since Nigerian independence, and his ousting provoked the political crisis that Nigeria has been struggling to overcome ever since.



Abiola: popular appeal

Abiola's imprisonment by General Sani Abacha in 1994, for claiming the mandate he had won the previous year, removed him from public life but in no way diminished his potential to cross the ethnic divide.

Abiola was born into poverty in Abeokuta in southwest Nigeria, and was the first of his father's many children to survive. He was a Muslim and a Yoruba, a member of one of the largest — currently 25 million — ethnic groups in the country. Educated at the Baptist Boys' High School in his home town, he went on to study accountancy at the University of Glasgow from 1960 — the year that Nigeria achieved independence from Britain. He had never forgotten, he observed five years ago, that it was the educational policy of western Nigeria's democratically elected government that had provided him with the scholarship.

Back in Nigeria he worked as an accountant, having joined ITT in 1968. By 1971 he was ITT Nigeria's chief executive and chairman, posts he held until 1988.

By June 1994 Abiola's challenge to Babangida's successor Gen Abacha had confirmed his emergence as a symbol of the democratic movement. He declared himself president in defiance of the military at a clandestine ceremony, and soon after was arrested and charged with treason.

Within a year it was reported that Abiola was in solitary confinement, and had lost more than six stone (84 lb). His physician reported that he had been cut off from the news, that he was no longer aware of the time. Meanwhile the senior of Abiola's three official wives, Kudirat, was gunned down by "unidentified gunmen".

Abiola was no saint, but his love for Nigeria and all Nigerians was unquenchable. The sporadic reports of his poor health, and the lack of treatment provided by his captors over the past four years, have been disquieting. The country he hoped to save from disaster is almost certainly once again on the brink.

His first wife, Simbiat, died in 1992. He had 18 unofficial wives and more than 60 children.

Richard Synge

Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, politician, born August 24, 1937, died July 7, 1998

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The Week in Britain James Lewis

Defence paper leaked as minister hunts for enemy

THE LEAKING of the Government's future defence plans, involving unexpectedly sharp cuts in spending, dismayed the Defence Secretary, George Robertson, who ordered an immediate inquiry into how the contents of his White Paper came to be offered to pro-defence Conservative newspapers.

Opposition MPs were not in the least surprised. With Downing Street under pressure over the "cash for access" row, the Liberal Democrats' defence spokesman, Menzies Campbell, concluded that the leak was no more than a "scandalous" attempt to create a diversion for the newspapers.

In the event, the paper contained no great surprises other than the size of the spending cut — more than £900 million in the £22 billion defence budget over three years. Nearly a third of the saving, however, will come from the sale of defence land and other desirable property assets.

Mr Robertson said his aim was to organise Britain's armed forces for "tomorrow's threats, not yesterday's enemies". They will be less prepared for a big land war in Europe, though better equipped for intervention further afield. To this end he promises to replace the three present aircraft carriers with two much bigger ones, and to create a "rapid reaction" force able to handle two Bosnia-size crises at a time.

Battlefield helicopters will be brought together under a single command. The nuclear deterrent will be maintained, though the Trident submarine fleet will be equipped with fewer warheads. The civilian Territorial Army will be cut, though members with specialist skills — such as doctors and engineers, who gave valuable service in the Gulf war and in Bosnia — will be encouraged to stay on.

Comment, page 12

VIAGRA, the new impotence pill, could swallow a quarter of the entire drugs budget of the National Health Service if it were prescribed for each of the one-in-10 men who are reckoned to be impotent. And the cost would soar further if the drug were also used by women.

The doctors' union, the British Medical Association, considering the implications of such spending at its annual meeting, urged that the Government should review the entire mechanism for the introduction of expensive new drugs.

The public health minister, Tessa Jowell, has said that Viagra will be available on the NHS only for those who clinically need it.

But, the BMA asked, how was impotence diagnosed? There would be abuse both in obtaining the drug and in using it. One member predicted that the use of Viagra would spread "like wildfire" through the female population. Women who had never had an orgasm would find the sexual pleasure they had been denied, and tell all their friends.

Finance, page 18

THE former Conservative MP, David Evans, was ordered by the High Court to pay undisclosed libel damages to the "Birmingham Six" who, he implied, had been guilty of hundreds of terrorist killings even though they had been cleared by the Court of Appeal of any such activity. He was also ordered to apologise.

The six men were sentenced to life imprisonment for two pub bombings in 1974 which killed 21 people and injured 162. They served 16 years behind bars before their convictions were quashed by the Court of Appeal on the grounds that the evidence against them was unreliable and that police officers had deceived the court.

Representatives of the released men have been concerned about continuing "smears" by people who refused to accept the acquittal. Mr Evans, who lost his Welwyn and Hatfield seat at last year's general election, claimed that his offending remark was made "off the cuff" in a talk to school pupils and released to the media without his consent.

THE SCALE of the illegal drugs industry in Britain is so vast that it is worth up to £9.9 billion a year, according to the first official estimates of its total value.

The Office of National Statistics conceded that it was impossible to say with any certainty how much the drugs crime market in Britain is worth, but it concluded that the scale of illegal activity might account for as much as 2.5 per cent of all annual consumer spending.

In strictly economic terms, the illegal drugs trade is seen mainly as an import business, with only a small level of domestic production — mainly of cannabis — and a negligible export trade. The number of cannabis plants seized in 1996 suggests that cannabis with a street value of £1.96 billion is grown in Britain each year.

The ONS figures suggest that Britons may be spending as much on illegal drugs as they do each year on wines (£6.4 billion), spirits (£5.8 billion), or even at do-it-yourself stores (£7.3 billion).

AN UNNAMED buyer who paid a record £4.6 million for a first-edition copy of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales at a Christie's auction turned out to be the American billionaire philanthropist, Paul Getty, who vowed to keep the William Caxton-printed volume on public exhibition in Britain.

When the book was sold at the same auction house in 1776, it fetched just £6. It was bought for the second Marquess of Rockingham, whose estates passed to his nephew, William Wentworth Fitzwilliam. The book came on sale again when the Fitzwilliams' Yorkshire home, Wentworth Woodhouse, was auctioned.

The previous record price for a book was the £3.3 million paid for the Guttenberg Bible at Christie's in New York in 1987.

THE notoriously congested stretch of the M25 motorway near London's Heathrow airport is expected to be widened into a 10- or 12-lane superhighway, with a lane for buses and one for cars carrying more than one passenger. Several other road projects are expected to be scrapped or placed on hold.



The west front of Westminster Abbey showing the 10 statues in position PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Modern martyrs find their Westminster niche

Madeleine Bunting

TEN statues representing Christian martyrs from every continent of the world were unveiled on the west front of London's Westminster Abbey last week.

Figures of people such as Martin Luther King and Oscar Romero will stand in 15th century niches — which have been vacant since the Middle Ages — as a symbol of the persecution Christians have experienced in the 20th century.

"We decided to use the niches to proclaim a message that the 20th century has been by far the greatest period of Christian martyrdom," said Canon Anthony Harvey of Westminster Abbey. "It is also very obvious evidence that the abbey is a living church which is constantly developing and changing. It is not a museum, it has a spiritual life as well as an historical life."

The statues were unveiled at a ceremony attended by the Queen, Prince Philip — whose great aunt, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia is one of those commemorated — and the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey. Relatives and friends of the 10 martyrs also attended.

A private donation covered the cost of the statues which were designed and carved by Tim Crawley and a team of assistants.

The selection of which martyrs to place on one of the most famous façades in Britain was not always obvious, admitted Canon Harvey. "We wanted figures who would be representative of all the regions of persecution around the world and all denominations," he said. "In some areas, it was obvious — such as Martin Luther King — but in other areas we consulted the local church. For example, when we asked the South African church they didn't hesitate and insisted that Manche Masemola was most representative of what people had endured for Christ."

The Gothic niches were always designed to contain statues, and after the restoration of the abbey's west front in 1992 it was decided they should be filled.

In the Middle Ages, such niches were usually filled with representations of biblical figures, saints, or historical figures such as kings or bishops. But it was decided by the dean and chapter that the abbey amply represented British history already and settled on the theme of global martyrdom.

BSE bill set to top £4 billion

David Hencke

THE cost of tackling the BSE crisis is set to rise to more than £4 billion, making it Britain's most expensive peacetime catastrophe, according to the first official figures produced by the National Audit Office, Parliament's financial watchdog.

The crisis has been linked with 27 deaths among humans, and 171,548 cases of BSE among cattle have been identified, according to latest figures released by the Ministry of Agriculture last week.

The audit office report warns that if Britain complies with European Union requirements to get the ban on beef exports lifted, 8 million cows will need to be slaughtered over five years.

Some 3.8 million cattle have been killed already with another 4.25 million facing slaughter by 2000.

The additional slaughter costs — in compensation to farmers alone — will add £1.3 billion by 2000 to a bill already set to top £3 billion this year. Up to April this year £2.5 billion had been spent on slaughtering animals, mostly in compensation to farmers and subsidies to abattoirs and meat renderers.

Plan for a buffer zone to isolate gene crops

James Meikle and John Vidal

MINISTERS are considering imposing "buffer zones" around fields of genetically modified (GM) crops to allay mounting concern over the technology.

The idea was mooted after a judge threw out an organic farmer's plea for a judicial review of government procedures for GM crop trials.

The seed and crop industry is already drawing up voluntary guidelines for the commercial introduction of such crops. They appear to accept that cross-pollination with non-GM crops can occur over large distances — raising the prospect of wide "isolation zones" around them.

But in the High Court last week, the judge, Mr Justice Jowitt, refused to give organic farmer Guy Watson — whose vegetable business at Buckfastleigh in Devon has a turnover of £1.5 million — the right to a judicial review of government procedures for trials of GM crops. Mr Watson plans to appeal.

It also emerged last week that a new industry grouping, the Supply Chain on Modified Agricultural Crops (Scimac), may recommend the use of more hybrid "mule" crops that cannot propagate, and the use of "terminator technology" — a genetic manipulation that prevents seeds germinating, and means farmers must buy new ones every year.

A draft document is understood to recognise that, for example, some transfer from GM oilseed rape to non-GM rape may occur over distances of 4,000m, and that cross-fertilisation rates of 3.7 per cent have been demonstrated over 360m.

Meanwhile some of the country's most treasured birds and wildlife could be wiped out if GM crops are grown without more testing, the Government's advisers on nature conservation warned. The skylark, the linnet and the corn bunting — all of which live on farmland — could be at particular risk, they say.

Calling for a three-year moratorium on the commercial growing of the GM crops, English Nature called for changes in the rules governing their planting until more tests had been done on their effects.

The move highlights a growing split between the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Agriculture, which want the early introduction of the crops, and the Department of the Environment and Transport, which is more cautious.

A spokesman for the leading GM company, Monsanto, said: "These products have been tested and grown for 20 years . . . It's in our interests to make sure they are safe."

In Brief

JOHN PIDDEN, a Briton, was sentenced to up to 14 years in prison in the Philippines for molesting an eight-year-old Filipino girl in a clear demonstration of the government's determination to crack down on foreign paedophiles.

BIG increases in health and education spending are expected to fund a recruitment drive for schools and hospitals and extra pay for doctors, nurses and teachers in the Comprehensive Spending Review due to be announced this week.

TAMOXIFEN, the so-called wonder drug for breast cancer, suffered a blow to its credibility when early results from studies in the UK and Italy showed it did not prevent the disease in healthy women.

PRIMARY school pupils under the age of eight have been banned from using calculators as part of a £60 million programme to overhaul maths teaching and give a greater emphasis to mental arithmetic.

FOUR British soldiers in Germany have been questioned over an alleged rape of the [illegible]-year-old daughter of a soldier.

MARGARET McDONAGH has been confirmed as the Labour party's first woman general secretary, the first in recent [illegible] not to come from a union, and the first not to have worked [illegible] way up through party ranks.

LORD PUTTNAM has been named as chairman of Nesta — the National Endowment for Science, Technology and Arts.

AN EXTRA £1.1 billion is to be spent on British science and engineering, with one third of the total coming from the Wellcome Trust.

LINDA WRIGHT, a multiple sclerosis sufferer serving 12 years for cocaine smuggling, has [illegible] legal aid to sue the Prison Service after she was shackled while in hospital after a stroke.

TWENTY-THREE Labour MPs voted against the Government over newspaper predatory pricing — especially by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, owner of the Times — in one of the biggest revolts since Labour came to power.

A GREEN PAPER on social security fraud put it at a minimum £2 billion a year and a maximum £7 billion — enough to cut household tax bills by £9 a week.

EMMA HUMPHREYS, whose fight against a murder conviction changed the way courts [illegible] the defence of provocation for battered partners, has died of anorexia at the age of 30.

Jason Quinn (left) aged eight, who died with his brothers Mark (centre) aged nine, and Richard, 10 (right)

'No road is worth these lives'

John Mullin

ORANGEMEN on Monday walked the nationalist Lower Ormeau Road in Belfast for the first time in two years. For the 120 members of Ballynafeigh Lodge, gathering on the same street across the bridge, it should have been a happy time. But the Union flag above the imposing red-brick building told its own story. It fluttered at half mast, a mark of sympathy for three young brothers murdered in their home in Ballymoney, Co Antrim, early the previous day.

Richard, Mark and Jason Quinn, aged 11, nine and eight, burned to death in an apparent sectarian arson attack. Their brother Lee, aged 13, was staying with his grandmother when the arsonists struck.

Noel Liggett, district master, struck a sombre note. There was no joy in the Parades Commission's controversial decision to allow the Orangemen to parade along the Lower Ormeau. He said: "This is going to be a very difficult morning."

Quite how tricky became clear within minutes. The Irish National Liberation Army telephoned a warning that it had left two bombs in the bins. Two controlled explosions later, it was clear the packages were hoaxes.

As the Orangemen reached the Ormeau Bridge, they cheered and halted and the bands stopped playing — for the second condition was to march in silence along the Ormeau Road.

An astonishing sight greeted them as the Lower Ormeau community scored a public relations triumph. Black flags flew from every lamp-post, a mark of respect for the 400 or so residents of the Lower Ormeau Road killed in The Troubles. About 600 protesters stood silently, heads bowed; some had placards, bearing one word: Shame. Others held black flags. Hundreds of black balloons were released.

Sun burst through after torrential rain as the band reached the Havelock Bridge. To the Orangemen, it was a signal they were back in their own territory. To the residents, it was evidence they were gone.

Police on Monday questioned two men about the murder of the three brothers. The arrests came as Portadown Orangemen defied opinion across Northern Ireland to continue their protest at Drumcree. But numbers are dwindling.

David Jones, spokesman for the Portadown Orangemen, vowed that they would stay until they were allowed to march down the nationalist Garvaghy Road. He said: "We are going to be here longer than we had hoped, but we are here."

The protesters are ignoring the advice of William Bingham, chaplain to the Co Armagh Orange Order, who said: "A 15-minute walk down Garvaghy Road would be . . . in the shadow of the coffins of three little boys who wouldn't even know what the Orange Order is about. No road is worth a life, let alone three lives of three little boys."

David Trimble, First Minister and an Orangeman, and Robin Eames, Primate of the Church of Ireland, also called on them to go home.

Elsewhere there was a stark reminder of the threat to the stability of the new political arrangements. Dissident republicans, behind a failed attack on London last week, dumped a car bomb outside the courthouse in Newry. The army defused the device.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary believes that Protestant arsonists were responsible for the Ballymoney attack and suspect the firebombers targeted Chrissie Quinn, aged 29, because she was a Catholic living on the mainly loyalist Carnany estate. Worse: she was bringing her sons up as Protestant. Ms Quinn comes from a long line of mixed marriages.

Five other Catholic families on the estate received a Christmas card last week. A single bullet was enclosed with each card.

Ms Quinn and her sons had to leave the estate two years ago after John Dillon, Ms Quinn's husband, was ordered out by the Ulster Freedom Fighters. Locals said the dispute was drugs-related.

The marriage fell apart, and the couple separated. Ms Quinn, reverting to her maiden name, came back to the estate. They only moved into the house last week.

The attack on the Quinn family by no means came out of the blue. In one week, loyalists have mounted more than 130 arson attempts on Catholic families throughout Northern Ireland. There have also been 10 recent attacks on Catholic churches throughout Northern Ireland.

The loyalists' aim is to persuade the RUC to overturn the Parades Commission's ruling banning the Orange Order from taking its traditional route back into Portadown from Drumcree Church. They managed to do so in 1996, the last time there was a ban, after shooting dead a Catholic taxi driver, Michael McGoldrick, aged 31.

The Loyalist Volunteer Force is suspected of being behind the attacks on the churches. It is also on the front line at Drumcree, and other paramilitaries are involved in the arson campaign. They have also attacked Catholic schools.

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Black deaths put police investigation in spotlight

Duncan Campbell

THERE are two appeals for assistance pinned up on the Cressingham Gardens estate in Tulse Hill, south London. The first is for help in finding a lost bull mastiff. The second is a police appeal to help them solve the grim and cold-blooded murder of a young black woman tied up and shot dead in front of her children.

On the other side of the River Thames in Stratford, bunches of flowers mark the spot of another ruthless killing, again of a young black woman, again with her children in the house when she was murdered.

On the night before Michelle Carby's death on June 29, her three children, aged 12, 10 and four, had said goodnight to her and gone to bed. When they woke they found their mother still sitting in a chair. She had been shot in the head with a handgun. Jewellery and money had been taken.

Five days earlier, there had been a knock at the door of Avril Johnson's home on the Cressingham estate in Brixton. When she opened it, four young men, aged between 17 and 30, barged in. They bound Avril and her husband hand and foot. As her two small daughters, aged seven and 18 months, cowered under the bed, she was shot fatally in the head with a handgun. Her husband was slashed across the neck but has survived. The men fled, taking jewellery and money.

London sees a murder almost every other day. Most are solved and most have an obvious suspect and a clear motive. What is particularly disturbing about these two killings, which police believe involved the same gang, is the level of violence used to perpetrate what appears to be a robbery. And what is particularly mind-focusing for the police is that, in the wake of the errors in the Stephen Lawrence murder investigation, London's black community will be watching to see how swiftly the killers are found.

Scotland Yard has responded by putting one of its best and most experienced men, Detective Chief Superintendent Jeff Rees, in charge of the two cases.

Avril Johnson's brother, the reggae star Tipper Irie, blames Jamaican Yardies for the killings. As in all such cases, possible drug links are being examined.

Straw reforms asylum system to end backlog and abuse

Alan Travis

MORE than 4,500 failed asylum seekers who face deportation each year are to lose their right to a legal appeal, under a streamlining of the system unveiled by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, on Monday.

Ministers also want asylum seekers to leave London where the immigration tribunals face mounting backlogs, and travel to Leeds or Glasgow to have their cases heard.

The proposals form the first plank of a major overhaul to be detailed later this month.

Mr Straw said he wanted to end the two-tier system of asylum appeals — the first hearing against the decision, and the second against deportation — because the system had become overwhelmed with numbers and abused by people spinning out their cases.

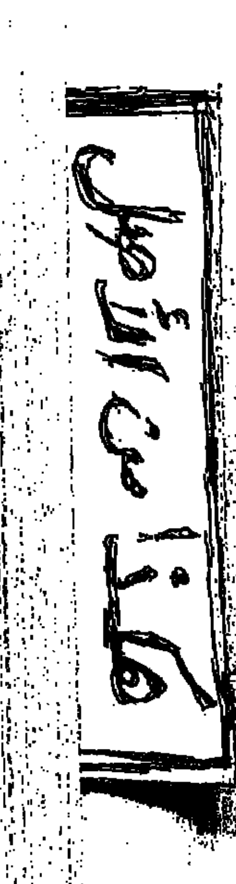
"What we are proposing is a single right of appeal where cases are finally determined within six months at the most," Mr Straw said. He also hopes to curb the rising number of High Court applications for judicial review of immigration tribunal cases — they doubled to 1,748 between 1994 and 1996.

Mr Straw said he intended to replace the system of deportations for failed asylum seekers with a new procedure of "administrative removals". The difference would be that there will be no right of appeal, as those thrown out will not be barred from applying to re-enter within three years, as is now the case for those officially deported.

Claude Moraes of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants said the package failed to challenge the underlying "culture of disbelief" in the way the Home Office dealt with asylum applications.

- Two asylum seekers, a Russian, Alexander Rostov, and a Nigerian, Kola Tunde Jinadu, have been on hunger strike for more than three weeks at Campsfield detention centre run by Group 4. The men have been taking only water. Mr Jinadu was admitted to the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford last week.

Meanwhile Adjibola Kasumu, another Nigerian who was the recognised spokesman for the hunger strikers, was abruptly moved last week to Rochester prison in Kent at Group 4's request — because of "disruptive behaviour", according to the Home Office.



'Culture of cronyism' spells woe for Labour

Jonathan Freedland on the stain left by the lobbying revelations

TONY BLAIR used to think that last autumn's cock-up over the single currency was the "worst moment" of his premiership. Now he might want to revise that opinion.

The past two weeks have brought woe upon woe on the Blair government, buffeting it from one crisis to another. From a lobbying scandal in Westminster to fears of recession in the City and the menace of violence in Drumcree, this has been nothing less than Labour's mouth from hell.

The trouble began on July 5 as the fax machines of London's political class hummed into life, all bearing the same bleak dispatch, the first edition of the Observer declaring that "New Labour insiders offer secrets for cash". Pagers trembled, home phones rang. The story presented a problem for the sultans of spin that was to dog them all week: there was no obvious single charge directed at any member of the Government.

At first that looked like an advantage, enabling party spokesmen to wave aside the Observer charges on the grounds that no government official had been accused of anything concrete. But that same fact soon became a difficulty. The Labour machine could not rely on the usual techniques of scandal management. If it had been a minister accused of financial impropriety, Labour would have known how to react.

Learning the lesson of the Major years and last autumn's Formula One affair — when dithering and delay proved costly — Downing Street would have moved swiftly.

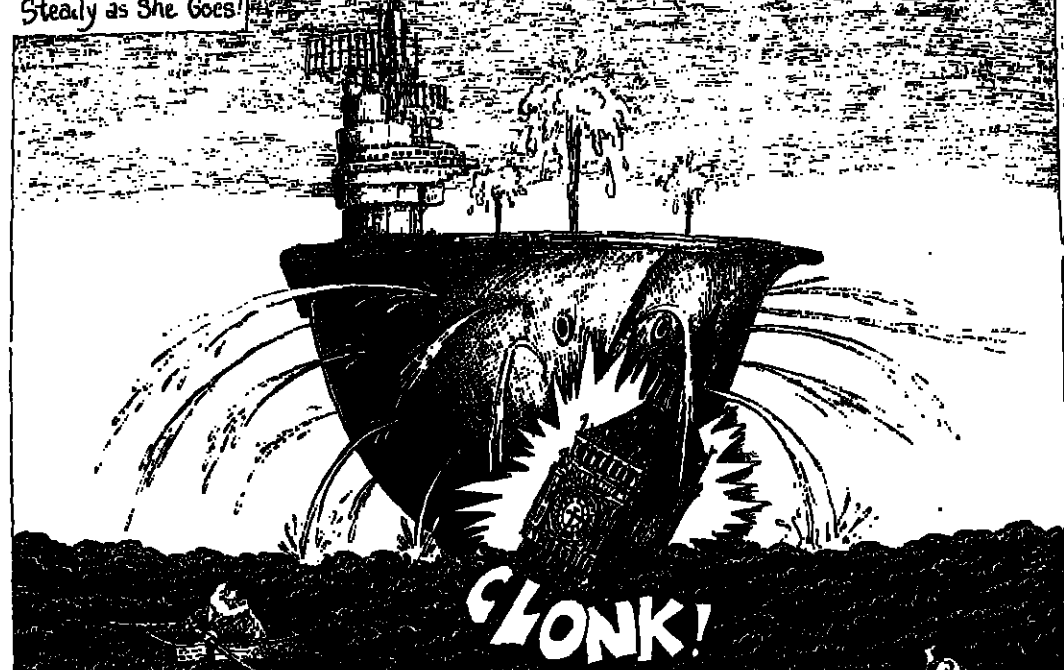
If the charges were true and politically fatal, the party bosses would have pressed for a resignation. If they were true but politically survivable, full disclosure of facts and an apology might have sufficed. If they were false, an instant libel writ would have done the trick.

But the Observer's story was not susceptible to that treatment. Rather than a single charge against a named office-holder, it painted a picture of a sleazy New Labour world inhabited by Young Turks and hungry hustlers, all making a buck from their proximity to power.

Fleet Street struggled all week to define what exactly the lobbyists had done wrong, and the Observer itself faced a couple of awkward days in the media crossfire. But for Labour the problem was just as great: how do you use "rapid rebuttal" to remove an unpleasant taste in the mouth? For that was the Government's task. It faced the queasy sense that a once-principled party had fallen prey to lax morals and a Thatcherite lust for cash.

Everything conspired against the Government's efforts to kill the story. It was July and newspapers simply had little else to write about. Nor could the Government simply trash the entire Observer account as a tissue of lies, despite Mr Blair's insistence at Prime Minister's Questions that "not a single allegation in the Observer story is true".

When one of the lobbyists named was suspended, and the most notorious of them, Derek Draper, resigned, both men effectively confirmed the allegations: why else would they have been dropped?



The drip-drip of revelations continued. And, for perhaps the first time, the Tories did not muff their chance. The Conservative leader William Hague rattled Mr Blair at Prime Minister's Questions, while Francis Maude proved a doughty inquisitor as Shadow Chancellor.

The Government has other worries, too. Rumbling through the week was the sound of a looming recession as official statistics showed manufacturing output on a falling trend for the first time since December 1992.

The business of government suddenly feels like very hard work. And it's not about to get any easier. MPs are due to deliver their verdict on the controversial finances of the Paymaster General, the millionaire Geoffrey Robinson, this week. They should have reported last week, but delayed — prompting speculation of a harsh conclusion.

Some cabinet ministers, including Clare Short and David Clark, want a total ban on direct contact between government and lobbyists — preferring client companies to make their own representations — but senior ministers doubt that would be practical.

However, they admit the rules need clarification as last week's Observer claimed that "faxes almost every day" went from the office of the Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, to Mr Draper's lobbying firm, GPC Market Access.

Mr Blair is prepared to refer the issue to Lord Neill if his cabinet secretary, Sir Richard Wilson, suggests it after completing his study of existing guidelines. Meanwhile it appears that the Prime Minister has decided to promote Mr Mandelson to the Cabinet as a fully-fledged departmental minister rather than in the roving role of Cabinet Office progress-chaser.

The fallout from the row over lobbyists' efforts to cash in on their ministerial contacts has been seen as particularly damaging to Mr Mandelson, but Mr Blair's apparent change of heart is said to pre-date last week's furore.

Some friends of Mr Mandelson go as far as to claim that media criticisms of two of his protégés are partly inspired by his ministerial rivals. In reality the whole Cabinet has been damaged by the incident which the Tories are busily labelling Labour's "culture of cronyism".

Clashes mar land-mines debate

Michael White

MPS RUSHED the Landmines Bill through all its Commons stages in a single unscheduled day's sitting last week, despite bad-tempered exchanges between ministers and the Opposition over crucial exemptions for British forces taking part in international exercises with countries which have not signed the Ottawa Convention.

The Foreign and Defence Secretaries, Robin Cook and George Robertson, sparred with their Conservative and Liberal Democrat critics, which marred the all-party consensus behind a bill which is widely seen as a tribute to Princess Diana's campaign to eliminate the scourge of anti-personnel land-mines.

The bill went through all stages in four hours of debate without a division and will go to the Lords in time to become law and allow UK ratification before August 31, the first anniversary of Diana's death. But it prompted sharp remarks between Mr Cook and his Tory shadow, the former Home Secretary Michael Howard, who complained of a "huge gap" between the convention and the detailed legislation.

Menzies Campbell, for the Lib Dems, echoed those fears, but backed passage of the bill. He was one of many MPs to praise the princess: "She lent the campaign both her humanity and even her style to great effect."

At the heart of the differences is a clause providing a legal defence for British troops involved in exercises with states not signed up to the convention — notably the United States. Russia and China have not signed, either. In effect, complained Mr Howard: "They are given full licence by this legislation to breach the Ottawa Convention."

With 60 million land-mines scattered around the world Mr Cook illustrated the scale of the problem when he said five people would be killed or maimed by land-mines by the end of the 90-minute debate.

Comment, page 12

Fagin who yearns to be loved

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

THE most loathed man in Parliament arrived early for the select committee on culture. William Hague had demanded to know where he was "skulking". Peter Mandelson is someone who can skulk in broad daylight.

Mr Hague had also condemned people around Tony Blair as "feather-bedding, pocket-lining, money-grabbing cronies". He could have added purse-snatchers, footpads, cracksmiths and gaberlunzie-men.

The problem for Mr Mandelson is that all Tories, and most Labour MPs, regard him as the Fagin of this thieves' kitchen, with Derek Draper as the hapless Artful Dodger, abandoned by his mentor at the first sign of the peelers. But this was a reformed Mandelson, a Mandelson who yearned to be loved.

No praise was too high for the committee. He had read their earlier report on the Millennium Dome. It "contains very valuable insights", he said. "It focuses the mind magnificently!" He lauded the committee's great sensitivity.

The committee decided to love him back. He had heartwarmingly generous treatment. If Walt Disney had designed the dome, he could not have had easier questions from Mickey, Donald, Goofy and Pluto.

They were torn between two fears. Either the dome is going to be a terrible failure, or else it is going to be so successful that London will come to a juddering halt.

Mr Mandelson reassured them about "evening the visitor flow", which means an entry time on everyone's ticket wallet (or "portfolio" as he calls it — such generosity from the minister who is famously without portfolio).

Finally Mr Mandelson was safe and home with a bizarre line of questioning from the Tory Christopher Fraser, who was interested in — no, obsessed by — the notion that people would be "stuck on rush-hour Tube trains".

What did he mean by "stuck", asked Mr Mandelson. Mr Fraser bridled. "Have you ever used the Underground in the rush hour — and found yourself in close proximity to *other people*?"

Apparently this horror had occurred to the minister, though he had emerged unscathed. "*I* would not like my wife and my children on the Underground in the rush hour," said Mr Fraser.

As the room rocked with laughter, Mr Mandelson coolly replied that if Mrs Fraser wished to do some shopping or visit a friend in the rush hour, that was a decision for her "and not for me or the Millennium Company".

The other MPs looked delighted by Mr Fraser's discomfiture. Mr Mandelson had perhaps found the only people in the Commons who would not happily kick his head in.

Police lose libel appeal

Stuart Millar

THE Police Federation faces a legal bill approaching £1 million after a federation-backed bid by five Metropolitan Police officers for a new libel trial against the Guardian was thrown out by the Court of Appeal last week.

The scale of the bill for its own costs and some of those of the newspaper will cause disquiet among the organisation's members. Until this case, it had fought and won 95 libel actions, netting over £1.5 million.

The court dismissed the officers' claims that the High Court jury which rejected their original libel action last year had been misdirected by the trial judge.

The officers — Reynold Bennett, Bernard Gillan, Paul Goscomb, Gerald Mapp and Robert Watton — had claimed that two articles published in the Guardian in January 1992 suggested they had been involved in planting and dealing drugs. The Guardian denied this meaning.

The newspaper's crime correspondent, Duncan Campbell, reported that eight unnamed officers had been transferred from Stoke Newington police station in north London at the same time as Operation Jackpot, an anti-corruption offensive, was under way. In their appeal, the officers contended that no jury properly directed could have reached the conclusion that the articles were not defamatory.

But the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, said: "Reviewing the complaints made both singly and cumulatively . . . we are not of the opinion that any wrong or miscarriage has been occasioned by any misdirection or non-direction in this case."

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Loophole in the land-mine ban

PRINCESS DIANA won a posthumous victory last week in the British House of Commons, when the Government drove through its anti-land-mine bill in just five hours — and the Tories did not have the nerve to oppose it. It had been said that the legislative timetable was too full to accommodate the bill this year — but Labour ministers now hope, we are told, to turn the bill into law by the end of the month. The fact that next month will see the anniversary of Diana's death is hardly coincidental, and her support for a total land-mine ban also ties Tory hands. The last thing they want the public to be reminded of is the shameful sniping against the Princess of Wales by senior ministers in January last year when she called for a ban while visiting Angola.

Whatever the strength of the Diana factor, the Government in general and the Foreign Secretary in particular are entitled to congratulations for pushing through the bill. This will allow Britain to ratify the Ottawa Convention, helping to move towards the target of ratification by 40 countries required for it to enter into force. As Robin Cook reminded Parliament last week, during the 90 minutes it took to give the bill a second reading, five people would have been killed or maimed somewhere in the world.

This makes it all the more regrettable that the bill is marred by an ambiguous clause. As voiced by Michael Howard, shadow spokesman for a party which dragged its feet on this issue for so long while in office, the charge is characteristically disingenuous. But clause five does raise legitimate disquiet. It makes it clear that British servicemen are not committing an offence if they take part in operations where mines are employed by other countries — a transparent reference to the United States — who are not party to the Ottawa Convention. Mr Cook explains that he wants to protect the position of, say, a British sapper over whose bridge an American truck drives carrying land-mines.

There is a simple answer to this: British troops should not take part in exercises, far less in operations, where anyone is using land-mines. Mr Cook says that the bill bans "active participation": the only moral position is to ban taking part altogether.

Hashimoto slips into the sunset

RYUTARO HASHIMOTO resigned in appropriately Japanese fashion on Monday. The Japanese prime minister may not have fallen on his sword, but he did tell the nation that it was all his fault. Yet it is misleading to blame the electoral defeat in the Upper House entirely on a prime minister who tried harder than his predecessors to tackle the country's considerable problems — or to believe that the only issue was how to manage the yen.

Once again the voters who punished the Liberal Democratic Party last Sunday were calling for a "fresh start" and a "new wind", politically as well as in economic policy. Japan has moved some distance from government by bureaucracy, but ministerial rule is still subordinate to the party and its factions.

The LDP has been given its most thorough defeat since it lost its majority in the 1993 election. Yet in the past five years it had worked its way back and it is far from certain whether this time the result will mean real political change. Both the new democrats and the old communists have gained, but previous Upper House elections have also sent electoral signals which turn out to be less than conclusive. One positive sign is the increased turnout of 50 per cent, reversing the 1995 decline to 44.5 per cent — though still well below the 65 per cent who voted in 1989. In that election the Social Democratic Party swept the board — yet by 1994 it had joined a coalition with the LDP. The new Democratic Party of Japan will have to do much better to present itself as a convincing alternative: the problem remains how to construct an opposition coalition — like Italy's centre-left "olive tree" — which would prove durable against the LDP machine.

Japan needs to redefine itself abroad as well as at home. This was cruelly illustrated by the Clinton visit to China which left Japan brooding over its reduced status as a nation "passed by". Washington was preparing to re-assert the old ties with Japan by giving Mr Hashimoto a lavish reception next week: his resignation throws this too into doubt. China's patronising official comment on the election result — Beijing said on Monday that it hoped for "political stability" in Japan — only twists a knife in the wound. It is hard to recall that until this decade Japan was seen as the natural leader of Asia: now the ground is shifting throughout the region.

The economic difficulties that brought down Mr Hashimoto are not new, although they have been given a much sharper edge by the regional crisis. US officials openly blame Japan's chronic failure to boost consumer demand as the root cause of the wider Asian problem. Certainly it does not help if the region's central dynamo is missing a beat. Washington's critical attitude did not assist Mr Hashimoto at home, nor did his pre-electoral hesitation over whether to introduce permanent tax cuts. Unless demand can be stimulated, the Japanese recession will only have created deflationary pressures elsewhere in Asia which could lead to competitive devaluations.

It was inevitable that Mr Hashimoto would have to go. He was too closely identified with last year's disastrous decision to increase taxes when what was required was the very opposite — permanent tax cuts and other measures to stimulate demand. Right up to the election the prime minister seemed to interpret fiscal reform as yet more pork-barrel projects of the kind that has brought the LDP into disrepute in the past.

Japan's crisis goes well beyond the present recession. It dates back well before Mr Hashimoto's period of rule. It is ultimately a crisis of incomplete transition: politically and globally, as well as in economic matters, Japan has emerged from the long post-war decades but still does not know where it is heading. This is only the latest setback to the attempt at national redefinition, and there is still a long way to go.

Women and the right to choose

ONE OF the winners of the United Nations' Population Award, announced last week to coincide with World Population Day, was not unexpectedly a family planner. In a world which is being more crowded at the rate of 80 million additional people a year, the work of the family planning head in Jamaica, which has achieved one of the lowest growth rates in the Caribbean, is of evident importance.

The other award is more thought-provoking. It has gone to a group of clan elders among the Sabiny people in Eastern Uganda who have worked with the UN Population Fund on a campaign against female genital mutilation. In 1996 they succeeded in reducing this practice by more than one-third.

This award underlines an argument heard increasingly since the 1994 UN conference on population in Cairo. Women's rights — including the right to freedom from torture or ill-treatment — are desirable for their own sake, but they also impact directly upon the population problem. As the New Internationalist observes this month, "giving women security is a better way of controlling population than any number of forced sterilisations".

This is also the central theme of a campaign launched this week by the International Planned Parenthood Federation. It reminds us that somewhere on the globe a woman dies every minute from pregnancy and childbirth complications, that one out of every four girls is married before she is 16 years of age, and that in many countries childless women or those who do not produce sons are regarded as outcasts. And that more than 130 million women and girls now alive have undergone female genital mutilation.

These issues should not be overlooked in the argument over the "demographic transition". The question is whether population growth will necessarily stabilise in the developing countries, as it has begun to do in the developed world. The need for it do so is an additional argument for poverty alleviation and debt reduction in the Third World. But even these measures may not be sufficient if women are still treated as child-bearers without the right to choose.

Ulster on the brink of tragedy – again

Ian Aitken

EVERYONE knows the quote from Karl Marx: "History repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." It is one of Northern Ireland's many claims to uniqueness that history repeats itself over and over again in those benighted six counties, but always as tragedy.

For the awful reality is that we have been here before. We reached almost exactly the same point of euphoric hope in 1974, under Edward Heath's government, only to have those hopes not so much dashed as trampled underfoot by a section of the unionist majority which would not give an inch.

On that occasion, Heath's Northern Ireland secretary, Willie Whitelaw, had managed by sheer force of personality to broker a deal that would establish an assembly very similar the one that Mo Mowlam has succeeded in putting forward. As now, the purpose was to create an all-party power-sharing executive that would resume local control of the governance of the province, thus ending direct rule from Westminster.

Then as now, power-sharing was the key element in the equation. For the intractable reality about Ulster politics was — and still is — that the ordinary rules of elective democracy do not, and cannot, apply. By definition, a minority can never secure enough votes to offer any hope of getting a hand on the levers of political power. And inevitably, a minority that has no hope of getting anything out of the ballot box is tempted to turn to violence as its only effective route forward.

It was Whitelaw who first recognised that the only viable way out of this impasse was to create a system of administration which guaranteed both communities a share in running the province. By a combination of charm, psychological pressure and sleight of hand, he succeeded in brokering a deal between the nationalists and the unionists that seemed set to bring a measure of stability, if not total peace.

Not total peace, however, for the simple reason that the IRA was not part of Whitelaw's deal. That is the crucial difference between his settlement and Mo Mowlam's. She managed to get Gerry Adams and his crew aboard. Though he met them in secret, Whitelaw did not.



They continued to bomb and murder on a spectacular scale throughout the Whitelaw peace process.

But the key element in both situations, then as now, was not the IRA. It was, and still is, the unionists. It is ultimately their willingness to operate any deal brokered by Whitehall that determines whether or not it will work.

In Whitelaw's case, it was the late lamented Brian Faulkner who signed up for the deal, persuading Ulster Unionists to accept ideas that would have been unimaginable only weeks earlier. This time it was David Trimble, who has driven the same party equally hard to achieve the Good Friday agreement.

The common element in the two events, however, is Ian Paisley, who boycotted both deals. Thanks to Paisley and his fundamentalist allies, Faulkner was eventually repudiated by his own party, and there followed the so-called Ulster workers' strike which eventually forced a new Labour government to abandon the assembly and impose direct rule.

It is arguable that the Heath government drove Faulkner to accept things which were more than his party was ever going to swallow, and there are those who say that Mowlam is doing the same to Trimble now.

BUT a better explanation is that Paisley is a past master at outflanking any compromise worked out with the Westminster parliament, and that both Faulkner and Trimble are ideal targets for Paisley's rhetoric. He will always be able to outbid people like them as long as there are thick-headed bigots like David Jones of the Drumcree Orange Order within earshot of his booming voice.

Always? Well, perhaps not this time. For the essential difference between 1974 and 1998 is that the present Government gambled on having a referendum on whether the people of Northern Ireland wanted a peace deal based on power-sharing.

Intended to see off the hard-line no-surrender Paisleyites, it turned up a massive majority for peace. The Heath government, by contrast, believed itself to be facing a threat from republicans rather than unionists, and chose not to have its vote on peace but on the continuation of the border between Ulster and the Irish republic. There was a large majority in favour of keeping the border, but everybody had known that already. There was no such certainty about the outcome of Ms Mowlam's ballot.

Armed now with their majority for peace, Tony Blair and Ms Mowlam are in a better position to use force against the threats of the Orange Order than were their predecessors at the time of the Ulster workers' strike.

It has always been one of the monstrous hypocrisies of unionism that people who call themselves "loyalists" never hesitate to defy the laws of the union to which they claim to be loyal, even to the point of attacking the forces of the crown. This time, however, they have gone a fatal step further: they will be defying the declared view of the people they claim to represent.

The Washington Post

Barricades burn on a Lagos street as riots mark the death last week of Moshood Abiola in Nigeria PHOTOGRAPH: PETER OBE

Devil Drives a Hard Bargain

COMMENT
Jim Hoagland

OUT OF Africa comes new proof of the old irony: No good deed goes unpunished. Diplomats who row into others' troubled waters to help them out frequently get caught up in the turbulence themselves.

The case in point is Nigeria. Undersecretary of State Thomas R. Pickering went there to talk last week to Moshood Abiola, the country's most prominent political prisoner, and seal a controversial deal that could have led to the Nigerian's release, new elections and a return to international respectability for West Africa's most important and most troubled country.

But Abiola, 60, suddenly became violently ill while talking to Pickering. Still under the control of the military junta that seized power and jailed him four years ago, the Nigerian collapsed and died shortly after at a hospital.

Fantastic, fatal coincidence? Or transparent plot to do in a troublesome politician who may have been balking at the deal the Americans were underwriting? If you lived in a country split by civil war, cruel dictatorship and intense social and ethnic tensions for three decades, which would you be more likely to believe? Abiola's family opted for conspiracy theory. The man who should have become Nigeria's democratically elected president in 1993 had either been poisoned or weakened by criminal neglect while in jail, they said.

Others voiced suspicion that the pressure put on him to renounce his presidential mandate had been deadly in itself. The government's assertion that Abiola died from cardiac arrest was challenged.

No one pointed an accusing finger at Pickering, a former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria and a career foreign service officer known for his integrity. But his presence at the scene, along with the earlier soft handling of the Nigerian dictatorship by the Clinton administration, make the United States an easy target for blame and suspicion in this case.

This is the essential Catch-22 of international diplomacy: Doing good deeds frequently means dealing with the devil and splitting some crucial differences. Abiola's death illustrates the perils of being caught, in mid-deal, by fate and public scrutiny.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan — who brokered Iraq's Saddam Hussein out of military danger in February and began burnishing his credentials for this year's Nobel Prize — had worked out the deal on Abiola's release with the Nigerian military. Annan said publicly Abiola had promised him to give up his mandate, something Abiola had refused to do before.

Some raise the pertinent question of why Annan and Washington had aligned themselves with the junta's demand that Abiola renounce his mandate before his release as part of the deal. "We should have insisted on his unconditional release," said Walter Carrington, a recent U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, who pointed out Abiola was being "forced to make agreements under duress."

The prize for dealing with the devil in this case was not just more support for a potential Nobel for Annan but better relations for the industrial countries with one of the world's most important oil exporters. Washington and its diplomatic partners had responded to the 1995 judicial murder of another junta critic, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and other outrages by the dictators with mild rebukes, limited sanctions and expressions of hopes for better times.

Pickering was ready to pursue reconciliation with the Nigerians in the wake of the sudden and also mysterious death last month of General Sani Abacha, the previous dictator, and the release by Abacha's successor, Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, of several dozen political prisoners.

The U.S. policy of waiting for peaceful evolution suddenly seemed to have a chance of being vindicated. By doing good — pursuing the conditional release of Abiola and a gradual move to democracy — Pickering could also do well for the State Department. Given the circumstances of Abiola's death, the United States can no longer take such a dispassionate, supposedly pragmatic approach to the Nigerian tragedy.

Whatever room existed for equivocation, for the bending of moral principle in the service of diplomatic accommodation, has been wiped out by the spotlight Abiola's death now focuses on Washington. The United States government must speak and act clearly on the side of democracy. It needs to dispel the suspicions, however unjustified those seem in Washington, that it was in any fashion part of an unholy deal with a regime already guilty of great evil.

Dealing with the devil may be an occupational hazard for diplomats and the politicians they serve. But neither does this practice seem to go unpunished.

Report Cites Reasons for Police Brutality

Roberto Suro and Cheryl W. Thompson

POLICE brutality remains a problem in many American cities because local and federal officials fail to adequately investigate and punish the small number of officers responsible for most abuses, Human Rights Watch charged last week.

Shoddy internal investigations, weak civilian review and limited enforcement of federal civil rights laws by the Justice Department have allowed abuses to recur, said a report from the New York-based human rights organization that examined how police brutality complaints are handled.

"Police departments like to claim that each high-profile abuse is an aberration committed by a 'rogue' officer, but these human rights violations persist because the accountability systems are so defective," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of the research and advocacy group known for reports on human rights abuses around the world.

As indicators of the scope of the problem, the report noted that in New York civilian complaints increased by nearly one-third between 1993 and 1997, that Chicago has paid out more than $29 million since 1992 to settle civil lawsuits alleging police misconduct, and that Detroit has paid out more than $100 million to settle such suits since 1986.

"Police officers engage in unjustified shootings, severe beatings, fatal chokings, and unnecessarily rough physical treatment in cities throughout the United States, while their police superiors, city officials, and even the Justice Department fail to act decisively to restrain or penalize such acts or even to record the full magnitude of the problem," the report concluded.

Rejecting the allegations made in the report, Bobby Moody, chief of the Marietta, Georgia, police department and president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), commented, "Top police executives across the country are doing a better job in recruitment, so we don't hire problem officers, and in monitoring police use of force."

The 450-page Human Rights Watch report recommended that Congress enact legislation that would withhold federal funds from police departments that fail to provide meaningful reports on excessive force and show improvements in oversight and discipline. The report also recommended a special prosecutor's office in every state to handle criminal prosecutions of police officers accused of wrongdoing.

Tom Perez, a deputy assistant attorney general in the Justice Department's civil rights division, said "the department is carefully studying the recommendations." However, he said the department disagrees with the report's conclusion that prosecution of police misconduct cases is a low priority.

Dow to Pay $3.2bn Over Implants

John Schwartz

DOW Corning Corp. has agreed to pay $3.2 billion to settle the claims of some 170,000 women who say their silicone breast implants made them ill. If the proposed settlement is approved, individual women could receive $12,000 to $60,000 apiece under the plan. In addition, the company would pay $5,000 to women demanding surgery to remove their implants, and $25,000 to compensate women whose implants had ruptured.

The proposal could mark a major turning point in a protracted legal and scientific battle that has dragged on for more than six years — and which, for many of the women and families claiming damage, has been all but stalled since Dow Corning filed for bankruptcy protection in May 1995 because of an onslaught of implant litigation.

"Obviously, a lot of the details have to be worked out, but I'd look at it as a breakthrough in an incredibly complex case," said Dow Corning spokesman Michael Jackson.

The outlines of the agreement were signed in a closed meeting last week by the Midland, Michigan-based company and those suing it in a Michigan bankruptcy court, and tentatively approved the following day by Judge Arthur Spector, who is presiding over Dow Corning's case.

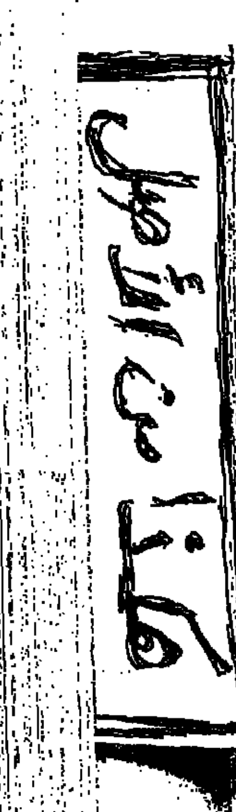
"This is a big deal," said Rick Laminack, a Houston attorney who represents implant recipients. "It puts momentum in the process."

Laminack and his partner, John O'Quinn, nonetheless voted against the plan, saying that it was still too vague. "The devil is in the details," Laminack said. Still, he said, the plan is a promising start.

Women suing the industry claim a lengthy list of complications from the breast-enlarging devices, including complications from surgery, implant rupture and long-term diseases of the immune system such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, which cause pain, fatigue and other symptoms. Dow Corning has acknowledged that rupture and surgical complications can occur, but has fought the notion that silicone causes disease.

The Food and Drug Administration imposed a moratorium on the use of silicone breast implants in 1992, stating that the companies had never offered sufficient evidence that the products are safe.

One implant recipient, Peggy Musmeci of Metarie, Louisiana, said the suggested $31,000 average settlement by Dow Corning is "not much money at all, for what people have been through . . . It's ludicrous what these manufacturers have done to us," Musmeci said. "They just want to get rid of us, any kind of way at all."





Bridegrooms hold Korans and flags at a mass wedding of 35 supporters of the radical Islamic group Hamas in the West Bank town of Nablus PHOTOGRAPH NASSER ISHTAYYEH

Middle East Clock Ticks

EDITORIAL

THE deterioration of the Middle East peace process is provoking Palestinians and Israelis alike to unilateral gestures that threaten the bare, lingering chances of resuming the talks. A resumption of good-faith negotiations becomes more difficult, though no less urgent, practically by the day.

Late last month the Israeli government took a preliminary step on its own toward expanding the boundaries of Jerusalem by roughly half, pushing the lines not only westward into pre-1967 Israel but eastward and northward to envelop Jewish settlers in the West Bank. The step would leave Israel in an improved position to dissect the territory of a prospective Palestinian homeland. It would have the further effect of strengthening a heavily Jewish demographic weight (now 70 percent) in post-1967 Greater Jerusalem — a salient consideration whether or not final-status negotiations on Jerusalem ever begin. Palestinians protested that Israel was acting unilaterally to preempt negotiations. An internal administrative matter, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu replied.

Last week the Palestinian Authority in effect responded — with a step on its own to expand its status in the United Nations. The Palestinians still will be a non-voting observer in the General Assembly but now can join the debate, sponsor resolutions and take part in conferences. It is not nearly so forbidding and explosive a step as Israel's treatment of Jerusalem, but it bears its own neuralgic quotient for many Israelis. The vote was 124 for, 4 against, the four including the United States.

The first American response to Israel's new Jerusalem bid was that it was provocative, insensitive and not helpful to the peace process. Characteristically, the first was followed by a second, backsliding response that merely put the initiative in a general category of actions "that raise suspicions and make it more difficult to get the (negotiating) process back on track." The Clinton administration should be clearer. It should be saying that Israel ought to defer its reach for extended power in Jerusalem and that the Palestinian Authority should put off exercise of its new General Assembly role.

Ex-Dictator on Child Abduction Charges

Anthony Faiola in Buenos Aires

IN THE end, it is the children who could be the downfall of a former Argentine dictator.

After receiving a pardon in 1990 for crimes committed during Argentina's "dirty war" — when more than 10,000 suspected dissidents and sympathizers "disappeared" at the hands of military rulers — retired general Jorge Videla has been ordered to stand trial on charges that he stole the babies of pregnant prisoners and gave them to officers and friends of the military for adoption.

A federal judge ruled last week that "crimes against children" were not covered by Videla's pardon, which granted amnesty to members of the military junta that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983.

The arrest and imprisonment of Videla, de facto president from 1976 to 1981 and a former army chief, underscores how far Argentina has come since that era, during which civilians lived in fear of military oppression.

Following Videla's arrest on June 9, the present military hierarchy here has remained virtually silent. Only a few graying retired officers spoke out in support of him, then quickly backtracked as authorities broadened the investigation into the abduction of children of "dirty war" prisoners.

"I think for us, this represents that we have reached a certain stage in our development," said Rosa Roisinblit, vice president of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a group made up of relatives of people imprisoned during military rule. Her daughter, a dissident, was taken prisoner while eight months pregnant in 1978. She was informed that her daughter gave birth to a baby boy a month later, but, like hundreds of Argentine parents, she never saw her daughter or grandchild again.

"This is the beginning of justice," Roisinblit said. "There are many more military leaders out there who were responsible, and it is time they faced judgment by this country."

Videla's arrest was ordered by federal Judge Roberto Marquevich, who under the Argentine justice system acts as both investigator and trial judge. Last week, he ordered Videla held for trial. As in other South American democracies that have emerged from authoritarian rule, the case has accelerated a trend in Argentina to reexamine its decision to pardon ex-dictators in the interest of peace.

President Carlos Menem, who initially granted the junta members amnesty in 1990 in a gesture intended to "unite the country," now says he will not lift a finger to pardon Videla, 73. "It's a judicial matter," Menem told reporters. "I am confident Argentina's democratic institutions are working well."

So far, Videla has been charged with five cases of child abduction; he could face more such charges as the investigation continues. More information surfaces daily here about "child stealings," and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo estimate their number at more than 230.

The emerging allegations are shocking. Nurses brought in by the military government in the 1970s, for instance, have gone public with their testimony in magazines and newspapers. One nurse told the magazine Tres Puntos that pregnant female prisoners were brought blindfolded and handcuffed to two secret maternity rooms at the Campo de Mayo army headquarters outside Buenos Aires.

There, they said, the women gave birth and were often thrown back into cells or killed without ever having seen their children.

Videla, whose lawyers are appealing the judge's decision, faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

Hackers 'Drill For Cyber War'

Bradley Graham

INTENT on developing more powerful weapons for penetrating enemy computer networks, U.S. military and intelligence authorities are struggling to define new rules for deciding when to launch cyber attacks, who should authorize and conduct them and where they fit into an overall defense strategy.

Not since the advent of nuclear bombs half a century ago have national security officials confronted weapons with such potential to alter the means for waging war, according to those involved in the planning. But the consequences of their use remain largely unexamined and problematic.

The full extent of U.S. offensive capabilities is among the most tightly-held national security secrets. According to various accounts, the government has explored ways of planting computer viruses or "logic bombs" in foreign networks to sow confusion and disruption. It has considered manipulating cyberspace to disable an enemy air defense network without firing a shot, shut off power and phone service in major cities, feed false information about troop locations into an adversary's computers and project video images onto foreign broadcast stations.

Pentagon officials say they are at an early stage of thinking about the various applications for cyber weapons and the legal, ethical and operational consequences of employing them. But because of secrecy concerns, many of the programs remain known only to strictly compartmented groups, inhibiting the drafting of general policy or specific rules of engagement.

"It's a little bit like medical ethics," said a high-ranking Defense Department official who requested anonymity. "The technology gives you the capabilities that go a lot further than the ethical context for using them sometimes. This is a very tough area."

A presidential decision directive last month outlining a plan for raising U.S. defensive barriers against computer attack made no mention of the offensive side of the issue. Senior administration officials say no presidential directive about offensive capabilities is planned that might help resolve definitional and operational differences between the Pentagon and intelligence agencies.

Similarly, Congress has held next to no public debate on the direction of the United States development of cyber weapons, writing guidelines for their use or weighing the potential international repercussions of unleashing them. At a Senate hearing last month that focused on the vulnerability of America's information systems to unauthorized entry, Sen. Carl M. Levin, D-Michigan, gingerly ventured a question about whether the United States is developing offensive capabilities. In a one sentence reply, George J. Tenet, the director of central intelligence, said the nation can rest assured that "we're not asleep at the switch in this regard."

For all the interest in cyber warfare, specialists cautioned that yawning gaps exist between what the technology promises and what practitioners currently can deliver. Large-scale computer attacks require an extraordinary amount of detailed intelligence about a nation's hardware and software systems, as well as about the habits and decision-making processes of foreign political and military authorities.

"Frequently, we like to think of electronic attack as the ultimate in precision weapons," said Vice Adm. Arthur K. Cebrowski, a leading Navy authority on the subject. "But these are not necessarily very precise instruments."

Much still is unknown about how a major cyber attack would play out.

"We don't understand the cascading effects on decision-making of what providing defective data to an enemy may mean," said a colonel responsible for the Air Force's information warfare plans. "That's a hard thing to model."

Other critical questions surround these largely untested weapons, according to experts inside and outside government. Given their broad destructive potential, for instance, should cyber weapons be placed under a special military command authority, similar to the Strategic Command that manages targeting plans for the U.S. atomic arsenal?

When should the United States justifiably consider taking down chunks of the information infrastructure of a foreign country? What are the risks of inviting retaliation?

How should intrusions into foreign systems be conducted in peacetime for the benefit of intelligence gathering, and when does such passive snooping — which often involves the same computer techniques as offensive action — cross some boundary into outright aggression?

By traveling across global networks and flitting in and out of countries without assuming a physical presence, cyber warriors pose a new challenge to old notions of national sovereignty. Their assaults on societal information networks blur traditional distinctions between military and civilian targets.

Michael McConnell, a retired three-star admiral who stepped down two years ago as head of the National Security Agency, said he knows more than a dozen people who could "do major damage" to a nation by mounting a computer attack with just a few weeks of preparation.

Senior Defense Department officials say they are attempting to define what classes of targets might be appropriate for cyber weapons and sorting out legal issues with Justice Department and intelligence community officials. Congressional sources report that the House and Senate intelligence committees have pressed behind closed doors for greater clarity in the kinds of cyber operations under consideration and for improved coordination among the Pentagon, CIA and FBI to keep their hackers from tripping over one.

The Pentagon has restructured units under the Office of Secretary of Defense and on the Joint Staff to give greater attention to offensive as well as defensive computer operations. And regional military commanders have been instructed to review their war plans for ways in which cyber weapons can be substituted for conventional munitions.



On the ball: Holland's football team reflects the country's ethnic mix PHOTO: GEORGE HERRINGSHAW

Dutch Do Battle With Identity

Eugene Robinson in Amsterdam reports on the changing face of society in the Netherlands

IN THIS city of winding canals and graceful old buildings, there is nothing remotely picturesque about the neighborhood where Carel Murzius lives and works — a sprawling quadrant called Southeast, where modern apartment blocks march glumly to the horizon. Parts of the zone are sterile but thriving; other sectors, older and grittier, look and feel like a black American ghetto.

What distinguishes Southeast is its status as home to the Netherlands' heaviest concentration of immigrants from the former Dutch colony Suriname, on the Atlantic shoulder of South America — men and women like Murzius, 54, who was a government security agent back home and now works at a community center.

Nearly 300,000 strong by most estimates, the Surinamese in Southeast and similar neighborhoods in the Netherlands' other big cities pose questions that the nation — like other rich countries throughout the world — is urgently struggling to answer: In a white European country, can these nonwhite newcomers ever truly blend into the national identity? Can they ever become truly Dutch?

For Murzius, the answers are complex. "I am still Surinamese," he said on first reflection. But later, he added: "The Dutch don't see me as an outsider." Then later: "The Dutch are your friends, but they still tell you, in effect, you can approach to this point, but no further."

These questions of assimilation are increasingly important, not only here in the Netherlands but in the rest of Europe and much of the industrialized world. Rich countries that once were overwhelmingly white have suddenly become much more racially diverse, mostly due to a flood of immigrants from poorer countries — former colonial subjects, refugees from war zones, economic migrants looking for opportunity, "guest workers" who will do the jobs that natives find unsavory.

According to official figures, of the 15.5 million inhabitants of the Netherlands, roughly 1.7 million are first- or second-generation immigrants. The largest groups in addition to the Surinamese are Turks (at least 260,000) and Moroccans (more than 220,000), mostly guest-worker families.

The major wave of Surinamese immigrants came here in the years just before and just after Suriname — which the Dutch had obtained from the British in 1667 in a swap for Manhattan island — was granted its independence in 1975. Virtually all are Dutch citizens, and only a few have left the Netherlands to go home.

As former colonial subjects, the Surinamese grew up speaking Dutch and were taught Dutch history in schools back home. These cultural factors eased their transition into Dutch society; in income, employment and general prospects, the Surinamese rank well ahead of the Turks and the Moroccans.

But they rank well behind the native-born Dutch. "Our situation is certainly not hopeless, but it's certainly not as good as it could be," said John Khodabux, an official with an advocacy group for Surinamese immigrants called SSA. "We have Surinamese doctors, lawyers, judges, but at the same time we have a lot of problems . . . We have a kind of middle position."

Still, many Surinamese say they believe they have carved out a permanent place in Dutch society. Along the way, they say, they have had to adapt — but they say they believe they have also altered the society permanently.

The Netherlands prides itself on being an open, tolerant society, duty-bound to offer generosity — in the form of ample welfare benefits — to those in need. These traditions run deep, and most Dutch say they welcome the newcomers. Dutch politicians who try to play the xenophobia card, as Jean-Marie Le Pen has done so successfully in France, have had little success.

"Black people are a part of this society now," said Henk Schrijver, a community worker who lives in Southeast. "You have to work with black people now. You see them on television, meet them in shops, on the streets. This used to be a society almost like Denmark or Sweden, full of blond people and nothing else. But the society has changed."

Yet it is not at all hard to find Dutch who believe all this openness and all this largess have gone much too far. "This is not my country anymore," said Elisabeth Kuiper, a retiree who was buying flowers with her husband Hendrik one recent morning in the Amsterdam neighborhood of Bos en Lommer.

"More and more and more of these people are coming. There are more black than white now in the schools," she said, using "black" to mean virtually all who are not ethnically Dutch. "I say they should stop it. It's already too much. But they keep coming."

Notwithstanding such sentiments, Surinamese immigrants said overt discrimination is rare. "If I'm in a bus or in a train or wherever, I feel very comfortable," said Henry Winter, who came here from Suriname in 1973 to study sociology at the University of Leiden. "That doesn't mean there isn't a certain image attached to ethnic groups in Holland. But society here just isn't that uncomfortable."

Like other Surinamese immigrants interviewed, he said he feels he is still Surinamese — even though he is a full-fledged Dutch citizen, a status he enjoyed in Suriname prior to independence and that almost all Surinamese immigrants easily have attained.

In his 1997 study of immigration to the Netherlands, Philip Muus, of the Utrecht University, cites conservative estimates that by 2015, the number of first- and second-generation immigrants in the Netherlands will top 2.5 million. This is a small country, the most densely populated in Europe, and so it is perhaps inevitable that the different cultures will cross-pollinate.

If it isn't already, soon it will be Carel Murzius' country, too.

10,000 Poor People Die And India Merely Shrugs

Kevin Sullivan in Kandla

SAIRA AHEMAD stood barefoot in the muck, kicking with her leathery toes at the shards of bones left over from the cremation of her neighbor's children.

It was almost 110 degrees and the sky hissed with hot little pellets of rain, but Ahemad, 56, had no shelter except the dirty shawl she pulled tighter over her head. All around were the shattered remains of the Shirwa Labor Camp, a city of shacks where thousands of impoverished migrant workers lived until June 9, when a cyclone roared across the tidal flats with 100 mph winds pushing a wall of water at least eight feet high.

As many as 10,000 workers, most of whom earned a living scraping sea salt from the sun-baked flats, were swept away in India's deadliest natural disaster in five years. But this country of 950 million people has absorbed the massive loss of life in its stride.

Even as bodies still wash ashore, to be doused with kerosene and cremated on the spot to fend off disease, new workers are traveling here to take their place, and slums dangerously close to the water's edge are being rebuilt.

The tragedy in Kandla, India's busiest industrial port, 560 miles southwest of New Delhi, illustrates a sad truth about the poorest people in one of the world's poorest nations. Drivers who hit a cow on the streets of New Delhi face the very real threat of being attacked by a mob furious over the death of a sacred animal. But when thousands of people from society's flimsy bottom rung die in a place like Kandla, there is a collective shrug of resignation: It's tragic, but it's simply the way things are for the very poor.

As Tejabhai Desai, a local development official, said recently: "No one bothered about these people when they lived. Now who cares once they're dead?"

Although the government has sent food and promised financial aid to the cyclone victims and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee toured the disaster area, critics here say the government has done too little for the poor of Kandla.

"If the government was serious enough, it had at least 72 hours to warn people about the cyclone," said Suhas Chakma, of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Center. "But the government was too preoccupied with other political issues. The fact that poor people were going to die in a cyclone was not on the agenda for the government in Delhi."

Since the storm, critics say, the government has played down the extent of the damage to keep the public spotlight off lax regulation of industries whose workers endure miserable health and living conditions. Officially, the death toll stands at about 1,000, although relief agencies say it could easily be 10,000.

The government rejects accusations that it is indifferent to the fate of the Kandla victims. Assisted by a wide range of private aid groups, all levels of government have helped in the cleanup and relief efforts. The government has built refugee camps and plans to erect permanent settlements for salt workers farther from the dangerous seaside.

"The picture is being painted that in India there is no law for poor people; this is not a correct picture," said P.S. Gadhavi, a member of Parliament from Vajpayee's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party who represents Kandla.

The state and national governments also have promised to provide about $2,400 to the families of each of those killed — provided they can show positive proof of death, which will be impossible in the vast majority of cases. There have been mass cremations of unidentified bodies, and many simply washed out into the Gulf of Kutch.

Many of those who died here had traveled halfway across the continent to find jobs in Kandla's salt pans — vast, low-lying tidal flats where sea salt, baked dry in the blistering sun, is scraped by hand from the rocks and mud. Salt workers go blind from the reflected sun and suffer skin disease and gangrene at alarming rates from wounds constantly exposed to brine and filth. An entire family might work for days to collect a ton of salt, for which they would earn less than $1.

"We never pressure them and say 'Come work in our salt fields.' They come by choice," said Babulal Singvi, a member of the Indian Salt Producers Association.

A month after the storm, Kandla is still a tapestry of destruction, death and rot. The storm blew down brick factory walls, bent massive cranes in two and tossed 50-foot-high oil storage tanks around like tennis balls. Huge ships were pushed so far ashore that they must be abandoned. The shacks of Shirwa and other laborers camps' exploded into kindling when the tidal wave crashed down.

Bodies were found hanging from electrical wires 20 feet above the ground. Corpses littered the streets and washed up on railroad tracks. The place still smells of death, with an overpowering stench of decaying soybeans, wheat and other cargo rotting in the relentless, wet heat.

While government agencies and private employers pass blame and shame around like hot rocks, there is agreement on one point: Almost no one seems to think that life will ever get much easier for India's migrant workers.

No one understands this reality more clearly than the workers themselves. Nanbai Gopal, 55, lost three children, her brother and her brother's wife in the storm. She lives with about 5,000 other survivors in a refugee camp in Gandhidham, about five miles inland.

All things considered, this camp is probably a step up from the hut in which she lived. It's clean and has sanitation and plenty of room for people to stretch out, away from the rain and sun, under a shiny, new corrugated metal roof. Gopal came to Kandla from the countryside to take a job sweeping. She said she and her remaining son will move back into their shantytown on the water's edge as soon as it is rebuilt.

Asked how she can carry on after such a great personal loss, she looked almost confused by the question, as if the death of most of her family is just one more in a long string of difficulties in a difficult life.

"I will work," she said, holding up her callused hands. "Thank God, I am strong."

Anatomy of a Political Suicide

Robert Sherrill

A WASHINGTON TRAGEDY
How the Death of Vincent Foster Ignited a Political Firestorm
By Dan E. Moldea
Regnery. 463 pp. $24.95

ON JULY 20, 1993, after finishing a cheeseburger-fries-Coke lunch at his desk, Vincent Foster told his secretary "I'll be back" and walked out of his White House office. Five hours later his body was found in Fort Marcy Park off the George Washington Parkway. There were no signs of a struggle. Apparently he had sat in that isolated spot, stuck a .38 caliber pistol in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

Dan Moldea, the author of numerous investigative books, among them Interference And The Killing Of Robert Kennedy, says "Foster's suicide was the most important White House death since the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy," not because Foster's job as the president's deputy counsel was that important but because he belonged in the innermost Clinton circle: He had been the president's friend since childhood, the first lady's former law and investment partner. (And was he her lover, too? There were rumors.)

Suddenly the old Arkansas financial mess known as Whitewater, which up to then had been hardly a blip on the nation's political radar screen, became big news. The "why" of Foster's death launched five years of investigations: several in Congress, two by independent counsels Robert Fiske Jr. and Kenneth Starr, and a series by the mainstream press. But the most flamboyant investigations — all aimed at proving a cover-up — were by those Moldea identifies as "a coalition of right-wing special-interest groups, as well as a handful of politically conservative journalists," all subsidized by Richard Scaife, heir to the Mellon banking fortune.

Moldea's A Washington Tragedy is a smart, chronological appraisal of all those investigations, including their FBI and police underpinnings, and Moldea promises that by following him through this morass "we will discover how a simple suicide of a troubled White House official developed — and was manipulated — into a long-running soap opera with historical significance. In other words, this is a story about how Washington works."

Although Moldea, a crime reporter of considerable repute and experience, uses his own investigations to clear up some of the troublesome questions about Foster's death, for the most part he is simply a neutral narrator, a levelheaded guide through the five years of sleuthing by others. His pages of notes at the end, by the way, are essential reading.

All the official investigations concluded that Foster killed himself. But murder theories were bandied about, mostly by kibitzers on the fringe like Rush Limbaugh, who, with zilch evidence, says Foster was actually killed in a "hideaway" apartment owned by Hillary Clinton. A lab analysis that found semen on Foster's shorts kept the murder theorists revved up.

Most of the suspicions that fed the various investigations, however, were not kooky. They were triggered mainly by 1) some impressively sloppy work on the part of the U.S. Park Police, who had jurisdiction in the case; 2) some high-handed manipulation of evidence by White House officials; and 3) some strange lapses and reversals of memory by the Foster circle. Typical of many fumbles: Not until after the Park Police had closed their case was a lab analysis done on the gun found in Foster's hand.

While the Park Police were kept at bay for a full day, Clinton insiders searched Foster's papers, looking, they said, for a suicide note. One Whitewater file was transferred to the First Lady's office, on her orders — which she later denied. White House Counsel Bernard Nussbaum so severely limited what the cops could look at that Philip Heymann, deputy attorney general, asked him, "Bernie . . . is there some terrible secret here that you are hiding?"

Suspicions about the White House's cooperation were heightened when — voila! — one of Nussbaum's assistants belatedly found in the bottom of Foster's briefcase a note that had been torn into 28 pieces. Strange — a week earlier and in front of witnesses, Nussbaum had seemed to empty that briefcase. (As with some other key evidence, the note bore no fingerprints.) Bitter and defensive, the note complained of mistreatment by the FBI, the press and the Republican party regarding "Travelgate," a minor scandal now almost forgotten.

Foster's last entry in the note: "I was not meant for a job or the spotlight of public life in Washington. Here ruining people is considered sport." True, says Moldea, "but the sport does have rules, and the best players know how to use them to survive."

Getting Away From It All

Robin Winks

THE GREAT HILL STATIONS OF ASIA
By Barbara Crossette
Westview. 259 pp. $28

BARBARA Crossette, the New York Times United Nations bureau chief, has written a charming, thoughtful, and on the whole well-researched book about hill stations as the residue of empire. Based on travels in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines in 1996 and 1997, and shaped by an adventurous sense of place, The Great Hill Stations Of Asia is, despite some severe competition, the best book on the subject ever written.

Hill stations sprang up wherever European colonialists allowed themselves a sense of permanence in fever-stricken lands, and where hills and mountains rose at least a mile above surrounding plains. There were hill stations in East Africa, but it was in Asia, and especially in British Asia, that these resort-cum-sanitarium communities played their distinctive role in empire-building.

Soldiers, administrators, merchants and missionaries suffered from dysentery, cholera, malaria, sunstroke and depression in the devastatingly moist and hot tropical lands to which their nations' imperial ambitions sent them. The death rate in West Africa (or for that matter in Newfoundland, also frighteningly high) might not be combatted, but where one could get above the port cities, the deserts, and the rain forests of South and Southeast Asia, one might recuperate, send one's children to European-style boarding schools, or mix socially with fewer constraints than in the imperial administrative capitals.

There were, before the retreat of empire, nearly a hundred such towns. Most were established between 1820 and 1885, though the French and the Americans created their hill stations later, and the British in Malaya latest of all.

These hill stations decayed after World War II brought rapid and often unexpected decolonization. They were needed less when rapid air transportation made Home, as the British referred to Britain, closer and when air conditioning, antibiotics and insecticides made them less necessary.

Now they are being given a new lease on life — or, as Crossette often implies, are being further destroyed — by a new generation of Asians who build ugly concrete hotels, gouge golf courses out of the green hillsides, and submit the once slow-paced small towns to the indignities of day-trippers and the horrors of — as she quotes another as saying (apparently not quite ready to embrace the thought as wholly her own) — the Indian love of noise. For Crossette is realistic about the faults of imperialism while retaining a romantic's love of the cozy inn, the musty library, tea and scones, and the un-air-conditioned room.

This book is even-handed, clear-headed and very well written in the tradition of the best of travel literature. Chapters on Murree in Pakistan; on Simla, Mussoorie, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kodaikanal, and Ootacamund in India — this last the focus of the first of the postwar books to celebrate the Victorian hill stations, Mollie Panter-Downe's Ooty Preserved (1967); the Nuwara Eliya in Sri Lanka; and Maymyo in Burma are wonderfully descriptive of society, life, hotels, roads, the landscape, as good travel writing must be.

Crossette is particularly good when she turns to the Kodaikanal International School, established by American missionaries for their children, and other educational institutions. She is a little less good with the missionaries themselves, though she is never condescending. She is at her best when most personal, especially in an extended description both very funny and very compassionate of being the only guest in Mussoorie's Savoy Hotel in the middle of winter.

I have had the good fortune to visit many of the hill stations, and Crossette makes me eager to go again, to forget the dreadful drivers, the undeviating offer of meals "veg or no-veg" in India, the marauding monkeys, and the ever-present rebuke of vast and apparently unchangeable poverty in South Asia. She makes them all, the nostalgic and the modernized, seem desirable once again in The Great Hill Stations Of Asia.



ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY RUSSO

A Sentimental Education

Claire Messud

THE PARIS YEARS OF ROSIE KAMIN
By Richard Teleky
Steerforth. 218 pp. $24

ROSIE Kamin's Paris years comprise half of her life. At 40, the protagonist of Richard Teleky's new novel has been an expatriate since the year after her college graduation, when she bought a cheap airline ticket and fled her sharp-tongued father in Pittsburgh and the memory of her Auschwitz survivor mother's suicide. Like the quietly dissatisfied exiles of Mavis Gallant's short stories, Rosie does not inhabit a Paris of romantic extravagance: She lives in "an apartment the size of a postage stamp" and ekes out a living teaching English at the Continental Language School. An immigrant among immigrants, she haunts the streets of the 19th arrondissement, where "Algerians and Africans, Vietnamese and Cambodians mingled with the French."

In the course of 20 years, however, Rosie has carved a life for herself, and for the last 10 Serge Deneau has been at its center. Twelve years her senior, Serge works as a ticket-taker in a repertory cinema and spends his Sundays selling L'Humanité, the Communist newspaper, on the street corner. His friends and political colleagues are Rosie's friends, too; and his shrewish mother and spinster sister, Odile, are Rosie's nemeses as much as his own. Rosie's French past — unlike the weighty, clinging Pittsburgh family she has escaped — is a thin trail of romantic involvements with figures as liminal to French culture as she is herself, foremost among them an elusive Algerian named Benyoub, a man with "a secretive nature and a need for solitude that excluded her."

Invisible for years, Benyoub resurfaces at the same time that Serge is hospitalized for tests on his liver. The two men, vastly different, become friendly; but their juxtaposition raises, for Rosie, unconfronted questions about her life and her choices. A visit from her sister Deb, a plump, whiny 38-year-old virgin who compulsively enters contests (her Paris trip is, in fact, a prize) and spends her free time at her New York synagogue "Davening for Dates," further unsettles Rosie. Bluntly questing in her misery, Deb reveals that she is part of a research study on the children of Holocaust survivors, and encourages Rosie to "think about what it means to be a Jew."

Rosie, living in a Paris racked by violence — she and her circle suffer muggings and racist attacks, thefts and ransackings — wants nothing less than to muse upon her heritage, upon the pattern of escape and silence that has threaded her life since her mother's suicide.

But Serge's illness and eventual death, Benyoub's inconstant flitting in and out of view, and her sister's dogged persistence — Deb drags Rosie to Budapest, to visit their mother's childhood home — force reflection upon her. In time Deb's efforts seem increasingly courageous.

Teleky's direct, sensuous prose captures not only the texture of a Paris that tourists do not see; it also conveys, through a wealth of quotidian detail, the subtle flickerings of Rosie's character, of her anxious movements through the life, thin as eggshell and as precarious, that she has constructed for herself.

The Paris Years Of Rosie Kamin is, in its delicate portraiture, what is often called a "small" or a "quiet" novel; but it is also an endeavor of considerable ambition, with its undertones of racial, religious and political discourse. Rosie is Jewish, after all, and Benyoub a Muslim. Serge is a Communist, but his family — like his culture — remains profoundly xenophobic. "Just because I was born in America shouldn't mean I have to waste my time with its particular hangups," Rosie argues, but her flight from Pittsburgh has mired her in the hangups of the French, in a place where she, as a foreigner, a Jew and an American, is a hangup herself.

Teleky does not make as much of this complexity as he might, preferring instead merely to report its symptoms. As a result, certain significances remain oblique, and certain characters sketchy. Serge's mother and sister are villainous beyond comprehension; Serge's closest friends, Thierry and Renée, speak too often in the stock phrases of old-fashioned French leftists. Benyoub, above all, upon whom Rosie clearly places much emotional weight, remains as elusive in import as he is in person; what he has meant or may mean to her is never clear.

What lingers of this fine debut novel is Rosie Kamin herself, in the lost tenderness of her bond with Serge and in the burgeoning tie with her distant sister. She may waver in the face of adversity, but she is — at the last, unlike her lost mother — a survivor.

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IMF spins wheel at risk-free casino for speculators

DEBATE
Kevin Watkins

IN THE land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king — and when it comes to addressing problems in the crisis-prone global financial system, the one-eyed men of Wall Street and the International Monetary Fund are firmly in control.

During the 1990s, the destructive power of capital markets has been seen in Mexico, East Asia and Russia. The scenario has become all too familiar. Unexplained euphoria takes hold and sucks vast sums into unstable markets, generating huge profits for foreign investors. Then panic takes hold, capital takes flight, the currency collapses and the IMF springs into action, bailing out investors who have transferred their assets elsewhere, leaving behind economic collapse and social disintegration.

None of which would have surprised the architects of the Bretton Woods system. Having witnessed the 1930s Depression, they sought to create a structure to regulate private capital markets. They realised these were failure-prone because of the tendency to panic and recognised that a general collapse could follow.

When Keynes designed the IMF he therefore ruled out capital liberalisation, and currency convertibility was required only for current account operations — broadly, trade and profit repatriation.

Today countries borrowing from the fund will be required to liberalise their financial systems; the upshot will be an unprecedented transfer of sovereignty to global markets dominated by Wall Street's increasingly monopolistic conglomerates.

The conglomerates, led by Citigroup and Chase Manhattan, are enthusiastic, seeing it as a mechanism for access to outlets for bonds, equities and commercial loans.

According to the IMF managing director Michel Camdessus, capital markets are no different from any others, and liberalisation will maximise efficiency and output. Evidence from each successive financial crisis in the real world suggests otherwise.

Take the case of Indonesia. This year, the economy will contract by 15 to 20 per cent, dragging another 40 million into poverty. Investment has collapsed, because of high rates and import shortages.

Unemployment has tripled to more than 20 per cent. Thousands of private companies, viable before the crisis, have been pushed into bankruptcy. Meanwhile public spending on health and education has fallen by a third, as the government transfers resources into debt repayments.

Such facts explain why the World Bank's chief economist, Joseph Stiglitz, remains resolutely opposed to capital market liberalisation.

When a forced devaluation quadrupled Indonesia's external debt, the IMF loan secured repayments for foreign investors by nationalising foreign debt and transferring the costs of adjustment to the public budget, reversing more than three decades of poverty reduction in the process.

Not content with creating a risk-free casino for reckless foreign speculators, the IMF is now seeking to expand its gambling outlets.

At present, Vietnam forbids foreign banks from holding more than 10 per cent of operating capital in dollars. In Chile, short-term equity flows are heavily taxed to prevent speculative activity. Such measures have helped to prevent a build-up of unsustainable foreign debt, yet they would be outlawed under the new IMF regime.

Radically different approaches are needed. Institutional investors such as mutual and pension-fund managers should be required to make provisions for losses commensurate with the risk of their investments.

This would help reduce the incentives for high-risk, speculative investment and simultaneously lower the potential for financial panic. So, too, would an international tax on currency transfers.

Better international surveillance of banking systems would also help at the margins, but the best way to ensure prudent lending is through international rules making imprudent lending genuinely risky.

In the case of East Asia, the authority of the IMF should have been used to force foreign investors to accept very large debt write-offs, and an immediate moratorium on repayments. It should not be used to subordinate the interests of the world's poor to those of Wall Street.

Kevin Watkins is a senior policy adviser for Oxfam

Viagra leads the lifestyle charge

Julia Finch on a drugs trade whose cost may cripple health services

IMAGINE yourself with a perfect face, framed by a beautiful head of thick, shiny hair perched on a lean body of ideal proportions. Add to that an explosive sex life. How much would you pay for all that?

Think about it, for purchasing bodily perfection could soon be possible. The world's finest pharmaceutical brains are working on drugs which could put such perfection within reach.

Call it the Viagra phenomenon. The little blue pill that started life as a treatment for angina proved an effective treatment for impotence — which affects one in 10 men. That market alone would be enough to make the diamond-shaped drug the world's best-selling medicine.

Last week Pfizer, the drug's producer, demonstrated the financial effects of Viagra. Its profits during the past three months have soared by 40 per cent. More than 2.7 million prescriptions for Viagra were written out by doctors in the United States during the 11 weeks after its launch on April 10. Pfizer raked in $411 million as a result.

Viagra is on the way to becoming one of the world's top 10 drugs within a year of launch, and so far it is available only in the US. It is one of a generation of new "lifestyle" drugs that aim not to cure traditional illnesses but to improve the quality of life.

Pharmaceutical groups are spending billions on research into treatments for such problems as fat, baldness, wrinkles and acne. Finding "cures" could transform the industry.

World-wide drug sales amount to $320 billion a year, but industry bosses have recognised that high earners in developed economies will spend hundreds of dollars a year to hold back the ravages of time and over-indulgence. Analysts calculate that such spending could double the size of the industry by 2003.

Pfizer chief executive William Steere — who decided to develop Viagra as a potency pill when its impact on virility was noted as a side-effect during its trials as a treatment for angina — admits "lifestyle" drugs have a potentially huge market. "We may find targets for hair loss, ageing skin, all the lifestyle issues of the baby-boomers," he said recently.

What is also certain, however, is that Viagra and the "lifestyle" drugs will spawn endless court cases and generate millions of dollars in fees for lawyers. A vast claim for damages is being lined up in the US in connection with two widely prescribed anti-obesity drugs, Redux and Pondimin, made by American Home Products.

Obesity is undoubtedly a serious medical problem. But life-endangering side-effects linked to Redux and Pondimin could leave AHP with a compensation bill of up to $9 billion.

Viagra court cases are already piling up. Within two months of the drug's launch one New York Casanova, aged 70, rediscovered his libido and decided to exercise it regularly, trying to evict his 63-year-old partner from their home in the process. The case was dubbed "America's first Viagramony lawsuit", and the court heard that he left his partner with the words: "It is time to be a stud again."

Last week California-based health insurer Kaiser Permanente revealed that it is being sued by a 77-year-old man made impotent by prostate surgery because it refused to pay for his Viagra. The insurer's reasoning is that it is not medically essential. "In most cases, prescriptions for Viagra may be medically appropriate," said a spokesman. "But the majority are not being deemed medically necessary."

Kaiser is not the only insurer to have doubts. Prudential Healthcare has also refused to pay for the drug on the grounds that there is too little clinical evidence to prove it is entirely safe. Some reports claim more than 30 deaths have been associated with the drug.

This month the British Medical Association was warned that Viagra could cost $1.6 billion a year — or one-fifth of the National Health Service drugs budget.

US women are experimenting with Viagra, with explosive results. Pfizer is now working on a female Viagra. If it works for those who have experienced sex problems, it is only a matter of time before those who consider their sex lives satisfying start to wonder what the pills could do for them. The prospect of the ultimate party pill looms for all.

Derek Machin, a consultant at Fazakerley Hospital in Liverpool, told the BMA that the demand for sex drugs cannot be estimated. "It will not be just men with sex problems who will ask for prescriptions. It is perceived as enhancing performance for the potent, and it will become a major drug of abuse."

He predicted doctors would be overwhelmed by demand. A family doctor from Derbyshire said that prescribing the drug for just 250 men would cost $200,000 a year. But thousands of men would hand over $800 a year — or more — for a raunchier sex life.

A black market is already thriving. At the American Urological Society's annual conference last month, normally attended by some 4,000 specialist doctors, more than 17,000 physicians showed up, and hundreds lined up to buy the little blue pills from a booth before it was shut down by the conference organisers.

The society's secretary, Dr Martin Resnick, said: "It is against our regulations and US Food and Drug Administration regulations. We closed them down and told them we never want to see them again at one of our functions."

There is also the problem of counterfeiting. Although Pfizer's Viagra is protected by patent, Third World drug manufacturers are already believed to be working on illegal copies of the drug. With a burgeoning black market, demand for "lifestyle" drugs will be huge — but the contents could be fatal.

Future perfect The lifestyle drugs market

	Depression	Overweight	Impotence	Acne	Hair loss
Name of drug	Prozac	Redux and Pondimin	Viagra	Roaccutane	Propecia
Market size	$5bn	$1bn	$5bn	n/a	n/a
Problems	Withdrawal symptoms and dependency	Faulty heart-valves	Headaches, blue vision, has been linked to heart attacks	Depression, insomnia, blamed for suicides	Impotence

Research: Lisa Miller

In Brief

THE IMF, under increasing attack from the rich nations for its handling of the Asian crisis and now stretched for resources, expects growth among industrialised countries to be dragged down by 0.75 percentage points, against its spring forecast of 0.5 per cent.

ACCORDING to a monthly survey by broker Merrill Lynch, overseas fund managers are starting to dump UK equities in the belief that there will be no improvement in UK economic growth next year. Retail sales in Britain dropped last month for the first time in three years.

THE European Central Bank is to impose a German-style system of curbs on the lending potential of commercial banks inside the single currency zone, in an attempt to ensure stability in money market rates after monetary union.

VOLKSWAGEN unveiled plans to create 11,000 jobs in Lower Saxony over the next five years. The timing raised a few eyebrows. Critics say the plans are aimed at assisting state premier Gerhard Schröder topple Helmut Kohl in the upcoming election. VW employs 80,000 people in Lower Saxony.

PROSPECTS for the hotly contested alliance between British Airways and American Airlines looked poor after Brussels gave only conditional approval. The European Commission said that BA and AA would have to give up a maximum of 267 weekly take-off and landing slots at Heathrow and Gatwick — representing about 19 daily return flights.

A UK High Court judge dismissed legal challenges to the Royal Automobile Club's $730 million sale to Cendant and cleared the way for $57,000 cheques to be sent to each of the RAC's 12,000 full members in September after Office of Fair Trading approval. The court rejected challenges to the sale from overseas members, retired members and others claiming a share of the spoils.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates July 13	Sterling rates July 6
Australia	2.6712-2.6772	2.6676-2.6745
Austria	20.82-20.85	20.93-20.95
Belgium	61.01-61.13	61.34-61.46
Canada	2.4263-2.4285	2.4211-2.4241
Denmark	11.27-11.28	11.33-11.35
France	9.91-9.93	9.97-9.98
Germany	2.9603-2.9634	2.9751-2.9790
Hong Kong	12.72-12.73	12.75-12.78
Ireland	1.1757-1.1781	1.1809-1.1836
Italy	2,917-2,922	2,910-2,953
Japan	231.23-231.53	230.26-230.63
Netherlands	3.3369-3.3398	3.3542-3.3581
New Zealand	3.1742-3.1804	3.1910-3.1982
Norway	12.58-12.60	12.64-12.67
Portugal	302.70-303.14	304.49-304.93
Spain	250.99-251.23	252.67-252.85
Sweden	13.20-13.22	13.25-13.28
Switzerland	2.4990-2.5022	2.5034-2.5070
USA	1.6417-1.6427	1.6459-1.6474
ECU	1.4968-1.4991	1.5038-1.5083

FTSE100 Share Index down 32.1 at [illegible]. FTSE 250 Index up 49.5 at [illegible]. Gold down $1.40 at $291.75.

Jospin presses for nuclear safety code

COMMENT
Hervé Morin and Sylvia Zappi

ON JULY 7 the Socialist member of parliament Yves Le Déaut presented his report on the French nuclear safety system. It had been commissioned by the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, with a view to preparing legislation to guarantee transparency in the running of the nuclear industry.

In his report Le Déaut judges the system to be "satisfactory in the main". But he criticises failings in the organisations responsible for controlling levels of radioactivity, and the way in which responsibility has been delegated to a host of departments and ministries, resulting in the appearance of "grey areas and a virtual absence of state control".

Le Déaut proposes that a new authority be set up both to protect the population against radioactivity and to ensure nuclear safety, tasks currently carried out by two separate bodies. The authority would be entirely independent of the Atomic Energy Commission.

The question is: will France's nuclear industry, still reeling from the closing down of the Superphénix fast-breeder reactor and a string of incidents that have cast doubt on the safety of nuclear installations, seize the opportunity that Le Déaut's report offers to improve the situation?

Le Déaut argues in favour of perpetuating and even beefing up France's nuclear industry. Furthermore he is aware that nuclear operators cannot go on exempting themselves from rules that apply to all other industries. This seems very much in line with Jospin's stance on nuclear energy — outlined in his general policy statement after coming to power in June last year — to make nuclear energy acceptable.

While closing down Superphénix as a concession to the Green members of his coalition, he has done everything in his power to maintain the same policy as his predecessors, which was based on the assumption that nuclear fission is France's main source of energy and a major component of foreign trade revenue.

The proposed law on transparency should put an end to the undoubted failings that have emerged in the area of protection against radioactivity, but will in no way alter France's energy policy.

The message has got through to Jospin's Green environment minister, Dominique Voynet, who recently echoed the views of her rival in the industry ministry, Christian Pierret, when she implied that nuclear energy was an excellent weapon with which to combat the greenhouse effect. In so doing she abandoned the historic anti-nuclear stance of her Green colleagues.

As France will have to live in the shadow of nuclear power stations for the foreseeable future, the government is right to pursue a policy that will reassure the public.

The important decision now facing the government is whether or not to replace, in 2010, the elderly nuclear power stations that were brought on line 40 years ago.

Transparency is not something that can simply be decreed. One only hopes that those who fervently believe in nuclear energy are prepared to abandon their old mindset.

If there is a genuine political will at work, it could manifest itself by ensuring, for example, that nuclear energy is a field in which documents are systematically published and procedures defined. That would at last enable experts on both sides of the divide to conduct their discussions on an equal footing.

(July 8)

PANCHO

'We're staying with nuclear energy, but under strict controls'
'So you're talking about green nuclear energy'; 'I must be dreaming'

Shock therapy for Paris

EDITORIAL

THE unexpected announcement on July 7 that London's Stock Exchange and Frankfurt's Deutsche Börse had forged a strategic alliance came as a harsh blow to Paris's status as a financial centre. It was also a setback for the French government.

It had hoped to make Paris the main financial centre of euroland, aware of the economic benefits in terms of jobs and commercial opportunities that this would bring. "I'm clearly committed to the growth of financial activity in France," said the finance minister, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, just days before the shock announcement. "It's a challenge of the utmost importance for the financing and growth of our companies."

For the past year the finance ministry — operating discreetly to avoid upsetting those members of France's ruling coalition who see the stock exchange as the core of what they call the "casino economy" — has done much to increase the competitiveness of France's financial sector. One essential thing it did not do, however, was change the tax system for traders.

In Paris the secret deal between London and Frankfurt has been viewed in some quarters as an act of betrayal. A few months ago much pomp and circumstance surrounded the signing of a co-operation project between the Paris and German futures markets, which was seen as a prelude to closer links and a challenge to the dominant position of the City of London.

No doubt Frankfurt realised before Paris that, now the euro is on track, political determination alone can no longer govern Europe's financial market. The hour of cut-throat competition has arrived. Industrial and commercial forces are all that matter.

That being the case, it would be unfair for Paris to resent the Frankfurt Börse's act of "unfaithfulness" with the London Stock Exchange, the largest in Europe.

But the Anglo-German alliance should, above all, be seen as a defeat for France's financial system, which governments have sought to modernise over many years. But they have been reluctant to try to convince the public of the key role stock exchanges play in modern economies.

On the contrary, they have encouraged the French nation's innate aversion to financial risk and its contempt for the stockbroking profession. In Paris traders are still regarded as unprincipled speculators, and the trading floors of banks as places for laundering dirty money.

Germany, which, like France, prefers industry to finance, has mobilised its forces in recent years. It managed to ensure that the European Central Bank would be located in Frankfurt, and its banks have been eager to forge closer links with British institutions in order to make up lost ground on capital markets.

The deal struck between Frankfurt and London may have hit Paris like a bolt from the blue. But shock therapy is not always a bad thing.

(July 9)

Voter dispute dogs Sahara referendum

Jean-Pierre Tuquoi

IT LOOKS increasingly unlikely that the referendum due to be held in five months' time on the future of the Western Sahara will take place. The Houston agreement, brokered last autumn by the former United States secretary of state, James Baker, was intended to settle a conflict that has dragged on for more than 20 years.

Officially, the Saharawis are supposed to decide in December whether they want independence or to become part of Morocco. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (Minurso) is still deciding exactly who is entitled to vote. By the end of last month, 133,000 potential voters had been identified in the 11 centres set up in Western Sahara and in neighbouring countries where Saharawi tribes live (Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania).

But in practice the process has run into the same problems that have scuppered all previous attempts to organise a referendum in the nineties. Morocco wants Minurso to register 64,000 extra people whom the Polisario Front — the Saharawis' pro-independence party — claims are not entitled to vote because they are not ethnic Saharawis.

Neither Morocco nor the Polisario Front is willing to compromise because both believe that too much is at stake. Since the "Green March" of 1975, the Moroccan regime has, with the blessing of the country's political parties, given priority to recovering what it describes as its "southern provinces", which have large phosphate reserves and abundant fishing grounds.

A great deal of money has been ploughed into the economic development of Western Sahara, where large numbers of Moroccan-born immigrants have been encouraged to settle. That policy, the future of the monarchy and the stability of a country of almost 30 million inhabitants could hang in the balance as a result of a referendum in which only about 100,000 voters will take part.

The Moroccan authorities will, therefore, allow the poll to be held only if they are sure that it will produce the right result — an outcome that is unlikely to happen unless they manage to ensure that the 64,000 people they insist are Saharawis qualify as voters. And the Polisario Front leaders are aware of that, too.

There is complete deadlock. The two sides will never be able to find an acceptable solution unless they adopt a more realistic attitude. The Moroccans will have to accept the fact that there is such a thing as a Saharawi identity. It may not have existed when Spain colonised the territory, but it has emerged as a result of armed clashes with Moroccan troops and years of exile in camps in southern Algeria.

If it wants to win over the Saharawis, the Moroccan regime will have to offer them something more than mere autonomy within the framework of Morocco's regionalisation.

There might also be a glimmer of hope if the Saharawis were more flexible. They should accept the fact that Morocco is not going to pull out of Western Sahara. Furthermore they should realise that Morocco is not attempting to assume the colonial role that was relinquished by Spain.

If the referendum is to have any serious chance of settling the conflict, both sides must call for a "yes" vote. In other words, the result must be consensual; otherwise it will lead to the political suicide of one of the two camps. There are signs that Morocco may be prepared to sit down and negotiate despite the hardline noises it is making about the referendum needing to "confirm" the "Moroccan-based culture" of Western Sahara.

The Polisario Front's position, too, is not as monolithic as it might seem. Divisions have appeared and a surprise or two may be on the cards. The Front's leader, Mohamed Abdelaziz, who was assumed to have pledged allegiance to Algeria, now has to reckon with two other Saharawi clans.

One is led by Bashir Mustapha Sayed, who was, for a long time, Abdelaziz's second-in-command. Kicked sideways at the beginning of the year — he currently occupies the position of health minister of the self-proclaimed Democratic Saharawi Arab Republic — he still holds two trump cards: he is the brother of the man who founded the Polisario Front, Mustapha Al Wali, and he has the support of senior Saharawi army officers.

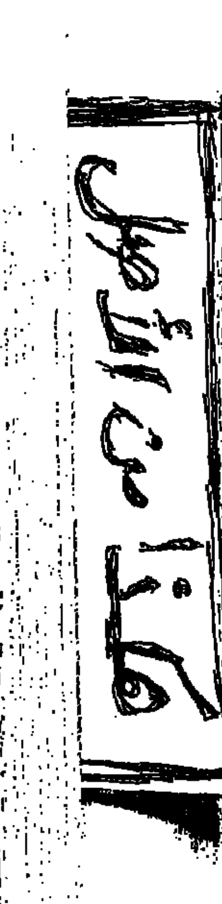
THE third faction consists of Saharawis who are interested in a rapprochement with the former Spanish colonial power. Nicknamed "the Spaniards", they reject the policies of the Polisario Front even though they are members of the party. Not long ago it was thought they were planning to set up a rival organisation, but for tactical reasons they have deferred that decision.

In addition, any compromise that is thrashed out between Morocco and the Polisario Front will have to be accepted by Algeria. Despite the problems created by its ongoing civil war, Algeria remains a key player in the region. Morocco's King Hassan knows this only too well: a year ago he secretly suggested a summit meeting with Algeria's president, Liamine Zeroual, but received no response.

Since then, relations between the two countries have remained cool. The "revelation" by the Algerian press a few months ago that there had been serious unrest near the Moroccan town of Oujda was seen by Rabat as disinformation circulated by the Algerian military regime.

The new Moroccan prime minister, Abderrahmane Youssoufi, has called for talks between Rabat and Algiers to be resumed, but his suggestion may well fall on deaf ears. Yet the key to a solution of the Western Saharan problem lies in a rapprochement between the two countries.

(July 10)



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
July 19 1998

Bolivia coca growers fight eradication plan

Nicole Bonnet
In Chapare


Leaf storm . . . Coca growers have not been able to find alternative crops PHOTO: JEREMY HORNER

"COCA or death!", "Down with the Dignity Plan!", screamed the delegations of *cocaleros* (coca growers) as they marched through the streets of Villa 14 de Septiembre, in the tropical Chapare valley about 750km south of the Bolivian capital, La Paz. The cocaleros, several thousand strong, carried a gigantic banner calling on demonstrators to prepare themselves for at least "five years of war".

The town's main square was a sea of multicoloured flags mounted on coca branches, and black ribbons as a sign of mourning — since April 12 cocaleros have died in clashes with the army.

The aim of the Dignity Plan, launched by President Hugo Banzer, is to eradicate Chapare's 38,000 hectares of coca fields over the next five years. "Eradication brigades" began destroying fields at a rate of 40 hectares a day under the protection of 3,000 anti-drug police and 2,000 troops. No state of emergency had been declared, but it felt as though one had.

The move aroused strong feelings among the cocaleros. The government plan reduced the income of about 30,000 families and, in all, about 250,000 inhabitants of the valley were affected, directly or indirectly.

The cocaleros were quick to react. They began by blocking roads with trees and rocks to prevent officials from moving in. Then with their fists, sticks, machetes, stones and slings, hundreds of men, women and children defended the barricades, which were removed only after the security forces had used tear-gas, bullets and digging machines.

The cocaleros then responded by digging deep trenches.

The first fatalities occurred in Villa 14 de Septiembre. Angry Indian women upbraided the troops in Quechua for fighting against their brothers. Locally born soldiers sheepishly took off their uniforms, helmets and boots as their commander looked on.

In the town's main square Evo Morales, the charismatic leader of the coca growers, shouted: "This is a dirty and criminal war. We must strengthen our self-defence groups to prevent ethnocide. We must prepare for an armed struggle. We can resist. If we hadn't done so in the past, there wouldn't be any Quechua or Aymara Indians left. The government wants to throw us out of Chapare. Are we going to leave?"

"No," the cocaleros replied.

Morales is prepared to negotiate a phasing out of coca crops, but he refuses to do so as long as the "eradication brigades" and troops remain in the Chapare valley — an offer that the government finds unacceptable.

Not one to mince words, Morales says: "The coca boom began under General Banzer's dictatorship in the seventies. Several publications, quoting Interpol reports and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, have even implicated Banzer and his family during that period. Why is the head of state now turning against the cocaleros? To clear his name in the eyes of the Americans."

Morales, who has been a member of parliament for Cochabamba since last year, says he is convinced that drug trafficking has the protection of the highest authorities in the state, who hush up scandals. No one in Villa 14 de Septiembre disagreed with him when he said that the cocaleros had nothing to do with the traffickers and did no more than sell their coca leaves to traders from the town of Cochabamba.

Coca production is crucial to the local economy. It has brought electricity and drinking water to the region. Without it the peasants would be destitute: there is no market for pineapples, manioc rots in the ground, banana trees wilt on the stalk and rice crops are overrun with parasites.

As for coca paste, the farmers never touch it. "Maceration pits are banned by our organisation," Morales says. Yet the authorities claim that the Chapare valley produces about 100 tonnes of paste a year.

The previous government spent $100 million trying in vain to persuade the cocaleros to grub up their plants voluntarily. Each hectare destroyed brought $2,500 in compensation. But once they got the money, farmers simply planted another field of coca.

The cocaleros' fight against the government has the support of the Bolivian trade union federation, Confederacion Obrera Boliviana. Extremely powerful in the fifties and sixties, when the country's wealth depended on its tin mines, COB began to lose its influence as the economy became less dependent on tin.

In April it called for an indefinite general strike, which was heeded only by teachers and workers in the health sector. Filemon Escobar, a former miners' leader and head of COB, now acts as an adviser to the cocaleros.

"That COB is supporting the cocaleros says a lot about how it has changed," Escobar says. "It has dropped imported political catch phrases, such as the class struggle. It has moved closer to the 2-million-strong Bolivian Amerindian proletariat, who have laid claim to their land, their territory and their sovereignty."

Milton Gomez, COB's executive secretary, takes a more cautious approach: "We should restrict ourselves to peaceful demonstrations rather than resort to rebellion and insurrection."

Will the cocaleros become the new spearhead of the unions, as the miners were in the days before Bolivia was hit by a tin crisis? Or will their fiery language hasten their defeat? The government has already issued a thinly veiled threat to COB leaders, warning them that their alliance with the cocaleros could be interpreted "as support for drug trafficking".

(July 7)

Oil 'pipeline of peace' gives hope to Georgia

Marie Jégo in Sachker

IN THE heart of Georgia, in the mountainous province of Sachker, 176km west of the capital Tbilisi, excavators, bulldozers and cranes operated by Indian, Pakistani and Georgian workers are busy on the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline. Early next year the pipeline will carry some of the oil extracted from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea terminal at Supsa.

A broad ochre gash that stands out against the surrounding greenery runs along the steep mountainside. In the middle of it is a shallow trench, no more than 1-metre deep, which accommodates a big red tube cushioned every 50m by sandbags. From time to time, a clattering vehicle carrying sandbags climbs the steep slope.

Work on the construction of the 940km "western route" of the pipeline, which began a year ago, is almost complete. It has been financed by the Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC), a consortium of Western oil firms that signed the "contract of the century" in Baku in September 1994 with a view to exploiting the oil deposits in the Caspian Sea.

Originally, the Georgian Pipeline Company (GPC), a subsidiary of the AIOC, intended to use a considerable proportion of the existing pipeline, built by the Nobel brothers in 1904 when businessmen and adventurers flocked to Baku hoping to make a quick fortune from oil. Until the arrival of the Red Army in 1922, Baku was a prosperous and cosmopolitan city.

"But in December 1997, as soon as we carried out the first hydraulic pressure tests on the old pipeline, we realised that only about 20 per cent of it would be usable," says Ed Ruckstuhl, a GPC engineer. The old pipeline, which had been punctured in many places by people siphoning off oil, had never been maintained or repaired.

The total cost of the new pipeline was originally estimated at $300 million, but it has now soared to $500 million. Georgia was too poor to help finance its construction, and will consequently levy very low transit royalties — only 17 cents per barrel on the crude oil extracted from the AIOC's oilfields.

"That will generate an annual revenue of $10 million laris (about $8 million) — which is very little," says Alexander Rondeli, head of the Georgian foreign ministry's strategic research centre. Oil will not start to flow through the Baku-Supsa pipeline until March next year.

In the meantime, since last November, oil from the Caspian Sea has been sent via an existing pipeline that takes a more northerly route — from Baku through Chechenia to the Russian port of Novorossiysk. Although the capacity of the pipeline is smaller than the one under construction — 5 million barrels a year, as opposed to 15 million — the transit royalties levied by Russia are much higher ($2.45 a barrel).

Georgia, which has no natural resources and has been devastated by civil war, believes its salvation lies in its role as a gateway through which the wealth of the Caspian Sea can be channelled westwards. Despite the low transit royalties it will generate, the pipeline is a vital asset for this small Caucasian republic. Apart from the obvious advantages it will bring — the renovation of existing infrastructure (port installations, pipeline, refineries) and the creation of jobs (more than 1,500 of the 2,132 people building the pipeline are Georgian) — its existence is widely seen here as a guarantee of the country's security, in that it will make it invulnerable to the designs of its Russian neighbour.

"To Moscow, we are like the favourite mistress of a man who doesn't want to spend any money on her," says Rondeli. "Everything here in the Caucasus has always been done by force or blackmail. The image of the Caucasian in the Russian imagination has remained the same as the one conveyed by 19th century literature: a nice barbarian you need to keep an eye on."

"Obscure forces from the north", as the Russians are sometimes referred to here, are believed to have been implementing, with some success, a policy designed to destabilise Georgia, a country that could be described as an ethnic powder keg. It is well known, for example, that Russia has been arming Abkhazia, a small nation on the coast of the Black Sea that was once an autonomous Soviet socialist republic within Georgia.

MOSCOW maintains an intervention force on the border between Abkhazia and Georgia. It consists mainly of young soldiers who, because they have not been paid, are less interested in peacekeeping than in extorting money from anyone who falls into their clutches.

A number of leading figures in the Russian regime who have close connections with the military-industrial complex, or who would like to see former Soviet republics return to Moscow's fold, have no intention of losing control of the Black Sea coast, where Russia still has two military bases, on top of three bases in Georgia itself.

In Georgian eyes the strongest evidence of Russia's intentions is the presence in Moscow of Igor Giorgadze, who in August 1996 masterminded the first attempt on the life of the Georgian president, Edouard Shevardnadze. Georgia has demanded his extradition, but without success. It is also rumoured that Giorgadze was behind the second attempt on Shevardnadze's life, five months ago.

Despite widespread distrust of Russia within Georgia, a new relationship between the two countries based on the prospect of economic development could well be forged. The notion of exchanging "pipelines for peace" is steadily gaining currency in the Caucasus.

Boris Berezovsky, executive secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States and representative of Russia's oil interests in the region, is thought to have suggested to the Georgians that a pipeline should be driven through Abkhazia, connecting Novorossiysk to Supsa.

Novorossiysk, which will receive the first oil from Baku — and later on the vast volumes of Kazakh oil — is "unusable for three months of the year", according to a Georgian oil engineer.

"That is why we have suggested to the Russians that they use our oil terminal in Supsa, in the hope that co-operation on this 'pipeline of peace' will bring down the curtain on our troubled relations."

(July 3)


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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
July 19 1998

Academic dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians is being undermined by familiar divisions, says **Lawrence Joffe**

Friend or foe?

BEN MOLLOV approached the classroom of Palestinian students with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. An American-born Jew who believes that Israel should retain large chunks of the West Bank, Mollov had emigrated to Israel in 1979 and then moved across the "green line" in 1989 to live in the settlement town of Efrat. Now, here he stood in Beit Omar, a village north of the holy city of Hebron, where last year a Jewish fanatic had murdered 29 Muslim worshippers in the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

The conditions for dialogue hardly appeared propitious, but Mollov was pleasantly surprised. "What really impressed me was the quality of interaction, the genuine willingness to listen, if not to agree, and the sense of personal respect the students showed me."

Three-and-a-half years later, Mollov runs regular interdisciplinary workshops for about 160 Jews and Arabs with his Palestinian partner, Ayman Ismail, a literature graduate from Hebron University. "At first it felt like crossing a whole universe," admits Mollov (who teaches politics at Bar Ilan University near Tel Aviv and Ashkelon College in southern Israel). "But, little by little, the two sides developed a relationship that has changed lives. I have learned a lot about myself and the area I live in."

It all seems light years away from the images of Binyamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat talking past each other in London earlier this year. In quieter backwaters there is some co-operation: a joint venture between Al Quds University in (Arab) East Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University and the Peres Centre, to set up a Centre for Traumatic Studies.

Some 60 Egyptian agricultural students have followed suit, plus a dozen Jordanians studying politics at the Hebrew University, and 250 Palestinians who have attended courses in child health, economics and drugs awareness at Ben-Gurion University, in Israel's southern Negev desert region.

But this is a forlorn drop in the ocean. The "people-to-people" codicil to the Oslo peace accords was meant to generate academic interchange. In practice official channels have jammed amid mutual recriminations — Israel accuses Palestinian history syllabuses of anti-Semitism; Palestinians claim that Israeli border closure is throttling their universities and schools.

Added to this, Israeli-Palestinian academic co-operation tends to come lower down the list of priorities, as Israelis and Palestinians struggle to rectify schisms in their own communities. Fifty years after independence, Israeli society is divided into distinct groups, which run along parallel lines, and have spawned multiple school education systems. Israeli universities, by contrast, are open to all — including Israeli Arabs, Druze, Circassians and other minorities. But it seems attitudes have been so moulded that the chances for genuine dialogue are greatly diminished.

Tom Segev, the eminent Israeli historian, says people live, study, shop and relax in different places. "Where would they meet? It seems Arabs and Jews only mingle naturally in hospitals and prisons! What contact there is, is often rather artificial — centred around projects which are, by definition, political. And where Jews and Arabs do live near each other — Jewish settlers and West Bank Palestinians, for example — it has not been a fortunate encounter so far."

Building bridges: students at Bir Zeit University PHOTO PETER MARLOW

Despite these impediments, some individual initiatives have blossomed into successful ventures in bridge-building. Wadie Abu Nassar, a Catholic Palestinian Arab from Haifa in Israel proper, took his Masters in political science in 1995; when he is not teaching the machinations of Israeli internal politics at Israel's Open University, he organises meetings and seminars to connect Jewish and Arab Israeli students with Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza.

For some years now Nassar has arranged visits by overseas Jewish students to the West Bank's Bir Zeit University, Ramallah, the best-known Palestinian higher education institution. He also engaged in research with a Jewish student connected with Israel's National Religious party, and has facilitated meetings on Israeli campuses that would have been unimaginable five years ago, such as a joint lecture by former Chief Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef and the Palestinian police chief, Nasser Yusuf.

But not everyone is so sanguine on the Palestinian front. In reality, their universities have been devastated by a financial crisis, caused by a combination of factors, not least of which is the effect of repeated Israeli border closures. Allegedly, lecturers have not been paid for six months at Bir Zeit. Then students went on strike over tuition fee increases. In such circumstances, "dialogue with the other side" becomes something of a luxury.

At the age of 22, Sameer Meri is already experienced in contacts with Israelis. Now in his third year of a business administration and economics degree at Bir Zeit, he hopes to set up his own business some day. He is a Muslim Palestinian who, as a representative of his student council at the Friends School in Ramallah, in 1992 responded to an approach from Israeli peace groups. Together with Jewish fellow students from "across the green line", Sameer travelled to Vienna to attend a 10-day conference on youth and education.

Talks resumed back in Israel and Palestine, but he quit them twice, first in 1993 and again in 1995. On each occasion outside political events upset his local efforts. "After setbacks in the peace process, many of us questioned the idea of talking within a formal framework. Too many Israelis are not willing to give us what we want . . . They know what is going on in the West Bank, but deny it, or try to hide what they do."

Sameer condemns the United States and Israeli governments in equal measure, and criticises the Palestinian Authority for losing touch with its young people. But at the same time he has gone out on a limb to talk with Israelis and is a realist in his political expectations: "We might wish for the return of Haifa or Jaffa from Israel, but we can't get them and are not asking for them. What I really want is more co-operation between a Palestine with secure borders, and the outside world — Israel included."

It's a simple dream for normality with which Israel's own founders would have concurred 50 years ago.

Lawrence Joffe is the author of Keesing's Guide to the Middle East Peace Process (Cartermill)



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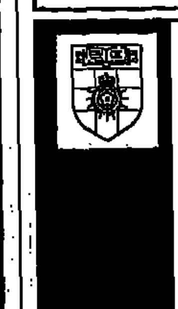
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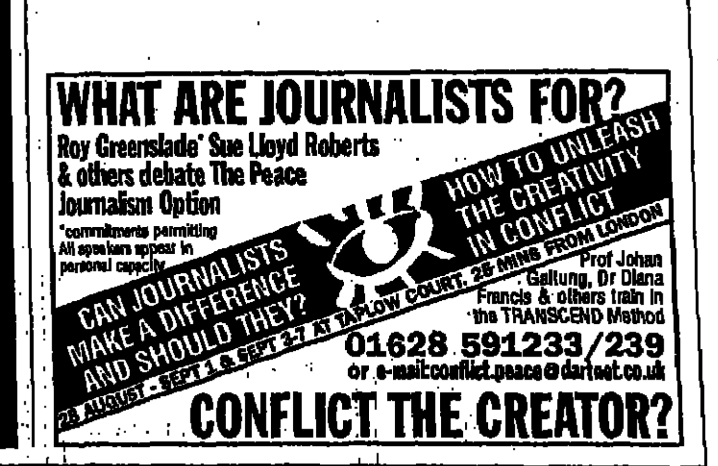
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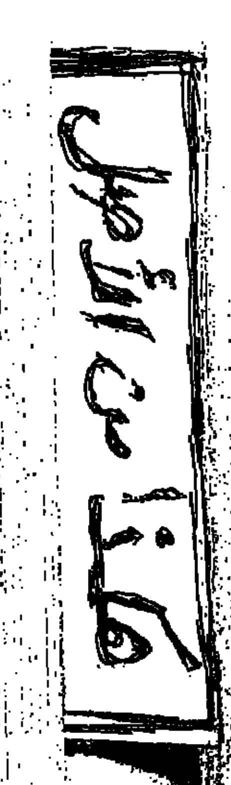
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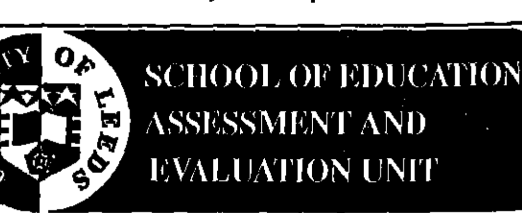
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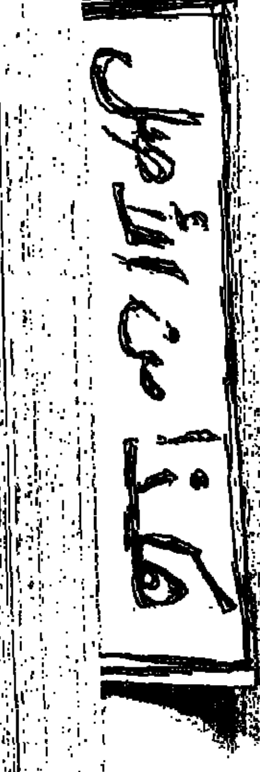
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For further details and an application form please contact Julia McDonagh, Human Resources Team 4, Save the Children Fund, 17 Grove Lane, London, SE5 8RD. Fax 0171 703 2278.

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For further details and an application form please send a large SAE to:

International Human Resources, Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7DZ, quoting reference OS/PM/LIB/AD/GW.
Closing date: 31 August 1998.
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For further information about the position of Community Development Director and the work of Afghanaid contact Oxford Human Resource Consultants Ltd on fax 44 1865 201717 or email mwills@oxfordhr.co.uk

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Full details about the Programme, Job Description and Conditions of Service are available from

Overseas Personnel Section, Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, UK
Tel: 0171 747 6178, Fax: 0171 747 6520, E-mail. a.deslvas@commonwealth.int

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For an application form and further details please contact:
Mike Watson, Mines Advisory Group,
54A, Main Street,
Cockermouth,
Cumbria CA13 9LU Fax No.(+44) 01900 827088

Closing date for applications is Friday 31st, July, 1998.



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Please write for an information pack and application form to.

Mrs Maureen Hanson, Head of Personnel Unit
Intermediate Technology
The Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development
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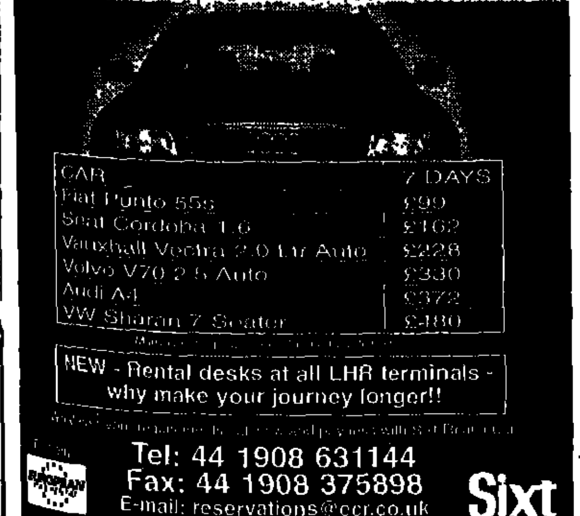
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Letter from Croatia Mary Cooling

Turning the tide

THE ROUTE from Zagreb to the Dalmatian coast runs through the Krajina, a frightening place where frightening things happened. The central part is a mass of bare grey stone peaks, sharply jagged for the most part. Sometimes a row of giant grey uneven teeth confront you from the horizon, waiting to snap you up. Nothing moves.

The mountains recede at the southern fringe where the ruined cottages begin. Beside the road, small neat squares of cleared ground mark the orderly rows of graves, far from any church. It seems a long time before the tiny villages begin to appear, with their few habitable cottages, signs of makeshift repairs and roofless churches. Gradually the landscape improves until much nearer the coast the country, though battered, comes alive.

Beyond the mountains the road runs down to the coast and the blue, blue Adriatic. It is another world.

This beautiful coastline attracted the yachting fraternity before the war. Along the Croatian coast from north to south are stylish marinas. But when the shelling began the tourists and yachts fled north, west and south, and Dalmatia's main source of income went with them.

For the past few years the café-bar and restaurant tables had been set out on terraces and pavements, ready for the tourists who never came. It was saddening and yet encouraging to see this indomitably hopeful spirit. But last year the tourists came back. Suddenly people swarmed in the villages and towns. Our narrow main street became a large traffic jam.

More and more yachts came into the village marina and many made winter contracts. The restaurants were packed. The fishing fleet could barely cope with the demand, on top of supplying the big Italian refrigerated vans. The young men found work in the marina. Previously they used to say: "They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work."

Supper at Lalija's was a splendid meal of minestrone, salad fresh from the garden, octopus risotto, fried fish, pancakes with home-made plum jam, and lashings of strong wine. But on this night Lalija had a bee in her bonnet about the village. Drugs, she said, were all over the place, even among the children. She intended to send her 12-year-old son to school in Zagreb.

"Are there no drugs in Zagreb," I asked. Apparently not. Vishna, the 17-year-old daughter, was already safe in the school hostel, safe it turned out from the handsome sailing instructor/fisherman who had brought a mass of mussels. He was allowed to visit only when Vishna was in Zagreb. He cooked the mussels and brought them to us. The pancakes were whisked off. It would have been bad-manners not to have eaten some mussels.

Alfons closed his bar-restaurant under the oleanders in the square early last September. Exhausted by hectic business and bursting with profits, he retired to the family home on a nearby island much earlier than usual. It was disappointing because it was a lovely place to sit and watch the goings-on in the pretty square.

In the autumn, carts, wheelbarrows and donkeys lumbered about, stacked with grapes for the wine-pressing. The tiny dark room in a narrow street, which was filled with casks of wine, a table and benches, wind-dried hams banging your head, was closed too because the owner had gone off to the wine pressing. It took time for the old men constantly trying the door to realise he had left. Along the quay and around the harbour the huge barrels were cleaned with sea water, ready for the new intake.

There is a small olive pressing factory just off the waterfront but the old women prefer to press their own oil in the autumn — wonderful, pure oil too strong for an Italian friend but not for us. The olive crop was very poor last year, they say, but then they say that every year. Normally the women sell it in the village market along with their ferocious home-made *rakija*, but last year we had to make complicated arrangements to ensure our usual supply arrived.



The FDR memorial in Washington, which shows Roosevelt seated PHOTOGRAPH: [illegible]

Roosevelt's wheelchair rolls into view

Martin Kettle

A CAMPAIGN by disability pressure groups has forced authorities in Washington to add a lifesize sculpture of a wheelchair-bound President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the FDR memorial.

When the memorial was first opened to the public in May last year disability campaigners complained that there was no sculpture to illustrate that Roosevelt, who contracted polio in 1921, spent his entire presidency in a wheelchair. Instead, the statue of Roosevelt only showed him seated, wearing a cape, with his dog Fala by his side.

The award-winning memorial has become the most frequently visited tourist site in Washington, overtaking the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the White House.

Announcing the change of heart this month, Vice-President Al Gore said the new statue would be by the sculptor Robert Graham. It will be placed at the entrance to the memorial, an open-air, walk-through commemoration of the phases of Roosevelt's presidency, in the centre of Washington.

"This agreement will serve both as a tribute to a true American hero who led our nation through its darkest days and reminds us that disability is not a barrier to achievement," Mr Gore said.

Throughout a legendary presidency that saw the United States battle its way out of the Great Depression and come to the brink of victory in the second world war, Roosevelt went to extreme lengths to ensure the public was not reminded of his disability.

Only two private photographs exist of the former president in his wheelchair. One at his home in Hyde Park, showing him with his dog and the daughter of the estate caretaker, will form the basis for Mr Graham's sculpture.

"We're very pleased. We're anxious to get it there," said Jim Dickson of the National Organisation on Disability. "We need this statue to tell all the children with disabilities and all their parents that anything is possible."

Although the wheelchair issue is the most controversial, historians have pointed out that the memorial presents Roosevelt in poses that are more compatible with 1990s sensibilities than those of his own time. There is no suggestion, for example, that Roosevelt in fact was a heavy smoker.

A Country Diary

Jacqueline Karp-Gendre

CHARENTE Maritime, Southwest France: **I found a dead juvenile guillemot on the high-tide line today. No sign of oil on his feathers. The Gironde estuary being nearly 500km south of the nearest guillemot habitat on the Breton cliffs, I rang the local branch of the French Association for the Protection of Birds. Could storms have blown him off course from Brittany? Apparently not. Many get caught in fishermen's nets further north. Already dead by the time the nets are winched aboard, the birds are merely tossed back into the sea where they float with the currents. Occasionally they are washed ashore as far south as the islands off *La Rochelle*.**

European legislation to save dolphins suffering a similar fate, by banning drift nets for tuna fishing, will not save the guillemots though. They are small enough to get caught in any netting and have no Brussels lobby rooting for them.

Another problem on its way from Britttany is seaweed. Now is the season for *la pêche à pied* — literally "foot-fishing" — as they call digging for cockles and gathering oysters and mussels. This year the practice has been banned in Brittany because of a toxic seaweed, dynophysis, which makes certain shellfish unfit for human consumption.

Further south "wild" oysters are banned as well, all along the Gironde estuary, because of the heavy metals in the water. The French are not law-abiders at the best of times, and consider the ruling exists simply to boost the local oyster farming industry, so at low tide people wade about with buckets and police are employed to watch them, but this vigilance is apparently not enough to prevent the inevitable and frequent cases of food-poisoning every year.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IF HOT **cakes sold so well, how come everyone stopped selling them?**

HOT CAKES are now taxed, cold cakes aren't. — *Jeff Balls, Danby, North Yorkshire*

THEY didn't stop. They just renamed them hamburgers. — *Ceri Smith, London*

IS THERE **a copyright on racehorse names?**

ALL RACEHORSE names must be registered with Weatherby's, the family firm that has administered the nuts and bolts of racing since 1770. Weatherby's will issue a horse passport that must be presented before every race.

Names are often ingenious combinations of a horse's sire and dam. For example: the Queen's horse Rash Gift, by Eau Genereux out of Nettle.

Weatherby's applies strict rules to the 12,000 or so applications it receives each year — a name must be no more than 18 characters long, must be in good taste (although some do get through!) and must not appear on a list of 250,000 or so registered names which includes, among others, all racehorses up to 10 years after death, all Classic winners, and all celebrated names, such as Arkle. — *Hilary Bracegirdle, The National Horse Racing Museum, Newmarket, Suffolk*

MOSQUITOES **are vicious painful pests but British mosquitoes are rare and seem to have little taste for human blood. Why?**

EVERYTHING considered delicious in foreign parts becomes inedible in Britain. — *David Hayter, Phnom Penh, Cambodia*

BRITAIN has mosquitoes that are avid biters of humans and, in some places such as the north Kent marshes, justify mosquito control by local authorities. But away from coastal marshes and damp woodland (eg Epping Forest), Britain does have fewer mosquitoes than continental Europe. The explanation may lie in the lower temperature, lack of extensive marshy tundras (summer breeding sites for mosquitoes in sub-arctic Scandinavia and Russia), and the relative rarity of sewage-flooded basements that are serious sources of urban mosquitoes in parts of eastern Europe. — *Chris Curtis, School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London*

Any answers

WHY **is there no standard global design for electricity pylons? —** ***Gary Booth, Leicester***

FOR **minimal environmental damage, should I dry my hands using the roller towel, a paper towel, or the hot air drier? —** ***Steve Babbage, Newbury, Berkshire***

WHAT **is the most blatantly wrong decision ever made by a football referee? —** ***Michael Gallagher, Dublin, Ireland***

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

The cutting edge

CINEMA
Gaby Wood

IN A SINGLE long take a lamplit man tells the story of his life. The camera remains fixed on his face, though his eyes are focused on the floor. His chin juts out, his mouth comes to rest in a witless smirk. A Southern drawl emerges in an unearthly soft roar, with humming grunts after each nervous sentence. Every so often he straightens his neck in his shirt collar and, we can see from the movement in his shoulders, methodically rubs his hands together.

The man is Karl Childers, a screen invention inhabited by Billy Bob Thornton, who also wrote and directed Sling Blade. We first encounter Karl as he is released from the asylum where he has been kept since he murdered his mother and her lover with a sling blade, or scythe. He was a boy when that happened; it was a small town and a famous case. Now he is talking to a young journalist and preparing to go out into the world again, an uneasy monster — more of an experiment than a man.

Thornton, who is also known for his co-authorship of One False Move and his appearance in Primary Colors, won an Oscar for this screenplay. He has said that the people he always compares Karl Childers to are Boo Radley from To Kill A Mockingbird and Frankenstein's monster. But he has also said Karl is a kind of angel, or Christ-figure. Karl never sleeps, he never sweats, his only clothes are always smooth and clean. He takes a pile of books with him everywhere he goes, bound up like a schoolboy's with a belt. One of the books is the Bible, another is "on Christmas", and one is about carpentry. It sounds simplistic, but Thornton has in fact brought to life an improbably gripping character in a mono *tour de force*. Karl is a riddle about responsibility — diminished or excessive — and you never know whether the mystery behind his immobile face is great complexity or simplicity.

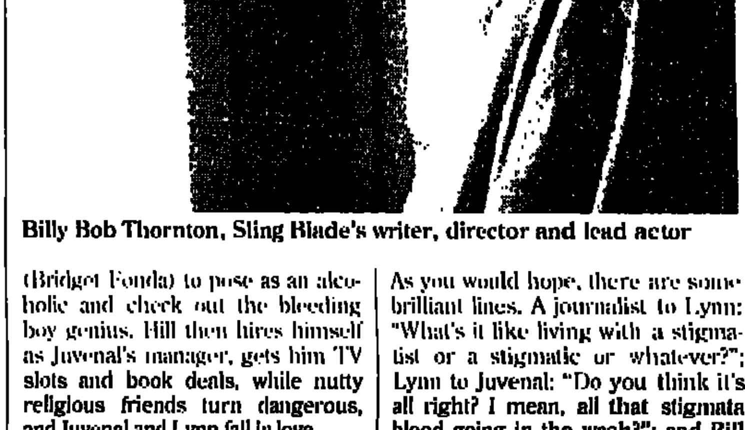
Back in a small town in Arkansas, Karl gets a job in a garage — he's "a regular whizz" with small engines — and learns to love french fries. He's slow but unthreatening, and he quickly befriends a small boy by helping to carry his laundry home.

Little Frank, a pixie-ish Tom Sawyer type underplayed by Lucas Black, likes Karl's voice because it sounds "like a racing car engine, and makes me not be nervous". He has reason to be nervous. When Karl moves into Frank's garage he steps into a muted world peopled by other marginal types — Frank's widowed mother (his father committed suicide), her gay best friend, and, most dangerously, Doyle, her violent boyfriend (played by country singer Dwight Yoakam).

When asked by the journalist if he would kill again, Karl replied: "I reckon I ain't got no reason to kill anybody." He had killed because he thought he was saving his mother, from violence and from sin. But immediately after his release, he finds in Doyle a reason that even someone without a violent past might act on: Frank and his mother live in fear of their lives. The film turns on this. Throughout Doyle's outbursts and insults, Karl remains collected. The question is whether he will kill again, now he has grounds for it; and whether he will act in fury or in simply-seen justice.

Paul Schrader's **Touch** is about what happens when the new Messiah comes and, contrary to popular fear, everyone's been expecting him. Revivalists, business sharks, gossip-mongers, chat-show hosts — not to mention the authentically infirm — jump straight on to the bandwagon. Juvenal (Skeet Ulrich), a beautiful young man with a face so open you want to fall into it, works as a volunteer at the Sacred Heart rehabilitation centre. He can heal the sick, he has stigmata, he is a miracle arrived on America's doorstep. Bill Hill (Christopher Walken), an "ordained minister" whose prior claim to fame was having the world's tallest lit-up cross, immediately smells a money-spinner. He gets his former assistant Lynn (Bridget Fonda) to pose as an alcoholic and check out the bleeding boy genius. Hill then hires himself as Juvenal's manager, gets him TV slots and book deals, while nutty religious friends turn dangerous, and Juvenal and Lynn fall in love.





Billy Bob Thornton, Sling Blade's writer, director and lead actor

All the performances are wonderful — even the craziest types are played unselfconsciously deadpan — and the love-at-first-sight affair is convincing in a way that must be almost impossible to pull off. The film is based on an Elmore Leonard novel, and Schrader is the man who wrote Taxi Driver and Raging Bull.

As you would hope, there are some brilliant lines. A journalist to Lynn: "What's it like living with a stigmatist or a stigmatic or whatever?"; Lynn to Juvenal: "Do you think it's all right? I mean, all that stigmata blood going in the wash?"; and Bill Hill in a nightclub: "I had a lovely wife, Barbara Rose, and her memory is all I can handle."

But despite these sparks and flashes, the film may leave you a little unsatisfied. It's misdirected — or multi-directional, perhaps — in a way that leaves it stringy and without a centre.

Oi, come back wif me car park!

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THE general manager was breaking it kindly to Fulvio that his little clothes shop was too down-market for Lakeside Shopping Centre. The room reeled around me . . . I clutched at a passing Ikea table.

Lakesiders (BBC1) is a series about the shoplifters' favourite shopping mall, a short, nicked-car ride into Essex. It has its own police station, and I'm not surprised.

This was Crimewatch with jokes. Chris had been caught cutting lumps out of the blasted bushes that cower around the congested car park. Caught with his fingers in the shrubbery, your average Essex man wears an air of outraged innocence and a baseball cap. Chris said he needed the shrubs to feed his horse. "If I stole one, then I've stole it, but I 'aven't, 'ave I? It's gonna *grow* again, innit? It'll probably grow *be'er*. I'm doing them a *favour*. Know what I mean?"

Eloquently argued. Cherie Booth could not have put it better.

The police, deaf to the song of the Essex warbler, pressed on and noticed that Chris's truck, piled high with purloined shrubbery, was also nicked. It was a comfort to me to know that, when they impounded his truck, he could always get home on his horse. Assuming, of course, he had a horse.

He said he bought the truck in a pub. Unluckily, the landlord could not confirm this as he did a runner with the takings before Christmas. This is quite wrong. The time to do a runner with the takings is *after* Christmas.

It was just after Christmas now, and 1,223 women had returned their presents to Marks & Spencer. A manageress was slashing clothes to prevent their resale. "Criminal really, isn't it?" she said. "But I quite enjoy it." That could be the shoplifter's motto. Lakesiders is another of those cheap-and-cheerful documentaries in which everyone — even the shoplifter and the store detective lurking among the shorts — seem delighted to be on television.

"Bless!" as Pauline Quirke tends to say. She does the commentary.

The horseshoe crab is of such immemorial antiquity its blood actually is blue. A chastening reflection for jumped-up nobility. Some of our own royal family had purple urine, which is the next worst thing.

The Purple Secret (Channel 4) was about porphyria, an agonising genetic disorder, which is thought to have caused King George III's bizarre behaviour. Two descendants, the Kaiser's sister and her daughter, were exhumed (what a boon to the historian is a good stout coffin) and both were found to carry the same defective gene. This raises hosts of ghosts. What about the Kaiser himself? How many dead men can be laid at the door of porphyria?

The mental disorientation, which is a symptom of porphyria, is often derided. I remember amusing myself with a piece about the Duke of Gloucester, who seemed jolly Hanoverian to me. And so he was, but not in the way I thought.

When Maria Callas flung herself over the battlements in Tosca, he said: "Well, if she's really dead, we can all go home." When he gave the prizes at Wellington College, he made a point of arriving by helicopter because the boys liked to see their parents' hats blow off. After a display of belly dancing in Cairo, he was introduced to the dancer. Silence fell with a bump. The duke was not a gifted conversationalist. At last he said: "Do you know Tidworth?" None of these things are evidence of insanity. Rather the reverse. But there is something . . .

He probably had porphyria, and his son William, who died piloting his own plane, definitely did. William's diagnosis led to a flood of royal urine and stool samples at the Porphyria Test Centre in Glasgow. We do not know the results. Poor devils, there are times when the price of a bit of stoat round your coat must seem way too high.

Far From the Madding Crowd (ITV), adapted from Thomas Hardy's novel, is exceptionally faithful and slightly slow. Which is a fair description of the hero, Gabriel Oak, a man whose virtues, like the rings in a tree, are not on the surface. Though, in fact, this Gabriel (Nathaniel Parker) is so striking, it seems odd that Bathsheba (the tenderly young Paloma Baeza) should overlook him. TV is apt to make you short-winded, but Far From The Madding Crowd, with its vast violet skies, takes deeper breaths.

Jamaican strummer

CD OF THE WEEK
Robin Denselow

FORTY **years ago, in Jamaica, a young record producer called Chris Blackwell founded a new label, Island Records. His first signing was the local guitarist Ernest Ranglin.**

Both men have done rather well since then. Blackwell turned Island into an international empire, with a roster that ranged from Bob Marley to Fairport Convention and U2, while Ranglin's career ranged from jazz to ska and reggae — Bob Marley once offered him a lifetime job as his teacher.

Now, after building up and then selling Island, Blackwell has started the Palm Pictures label, and his very first release is In Search Of The Lost Riddim, an exquisite new set by his old colleague Ranglin and arguably his finest work to date.

Blackwell is interested in Africa these days, and the unquestioned superstar on his new roster is the Senegalese singer Baaba Maal, whose new album Nomad Soul is also released this month. Understandably, Maal has been getting all the publicity, but in many ways the new Ranglin set — recorded in Senegal with help from Baaba Maal and many of his band — is more exciting.

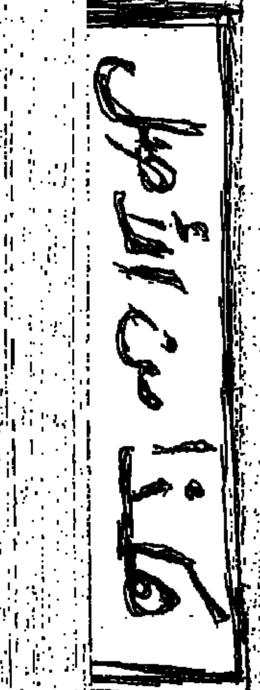
For while Maal's new songs veer at times towards Western pop, and are not always as inventive or interesting as the material on his last, classic album, Firin' In Fouta, Ranglin has travelled to West Africa to find real inspiration.

He may be in his mid-60s, but his rapid-fire guitar work is as fluid and sensitive as ever, and working with Maal and his band has clearly given him a completely new lease of life. He may be famous for matching jazz solos against a reggae rhythm, but this time round the rhythms are predominantly African (with a dash of reggae and funk added for good measure).

Ranglin is backed by bass and talking drums along with the kora, the West African harp and by singers who include Maal and long-time colleague Mansour Seck, as well as a quite extraordinarily powerful local 14-year-old chanteuse, Cisse Diamba Kanoute. Ranglin, who proves a perfect sparring partner for them all, never tries to dominate but eases his quietly dazzling solos in and around the playing by the other musicians. The result is a gently rhythmic, refreshingly original and contemporary-sounding fusion that is both joyful, subtle, and remarkably classy.

In the process he also brings out some inspired performances from Maal, who has chosen Ranglin as his "special guest" at his show in London this month: one support act that should not be missed.

To order In Search Of The Lost Riddim (Palm Pictures) for £14.49 contact CultureShop (see page 29). Free p&p in UK; 10% in Europe; 15% in the rest of the world



Congo passions

Giles Foden

The Catastrophist
by Ronan Bennett
Review 313pp £14.99

THOSE who suspected Ronan Bennett of being a novelist who lets his political enthusiasms — Irish republicanism, social justice — rein in the impulse towards a more elastic, heartfelt fiction will not have their suspicions confirmed by his new novel. Set in Congo before and after independence from Belgium, The Catastrophist confronts head on the relationship between art and politics.

What is, what should be, the role of a writer caught up in a conflict? This is the question faced by Irish historian-turned-novelist James Gillespie, who follows his lover Inès, a reporter, to Léopoldville in 1959. Inès works for the Italian communist paper L'Unità and as such is very much biased towards the faction led by Patrice Lumumba, the Congo nationalist leader killed by rightwing forces when independence arrives a year later.

From the moment we meet this "small, gauche figure in a sleeveless blue polka-dot frock", it is clear that she is very different from Gillespie. She is absolutist, forceful, active (out chasing and making stories); he is uncertain, conditional, passive (sitting at home writing his novel). Only at night in bed do they meet on equal terms — Bennett is very good on sex in the tropics — but this isn't enough to keep them together when the chaos of the post-independence period demands allegiances from even the most disengaged expatriate.

Up till then Gillespie has been able to integrate himself into the Belgian community, meeting the whole gamut of political opinion. He meets beefy Mark Stipe, a CIA operative whose role is to secure power for a pro-Western grouping in Congo. At first Gillespie warms to Stipe. The American gives him information (about the date for independence) that kicks off a lucrative freelance career; they go out drinking; they even discuss books together. But slowly it becomes clear that Inès's suspicions that Stipe is "the enemy" may be right.

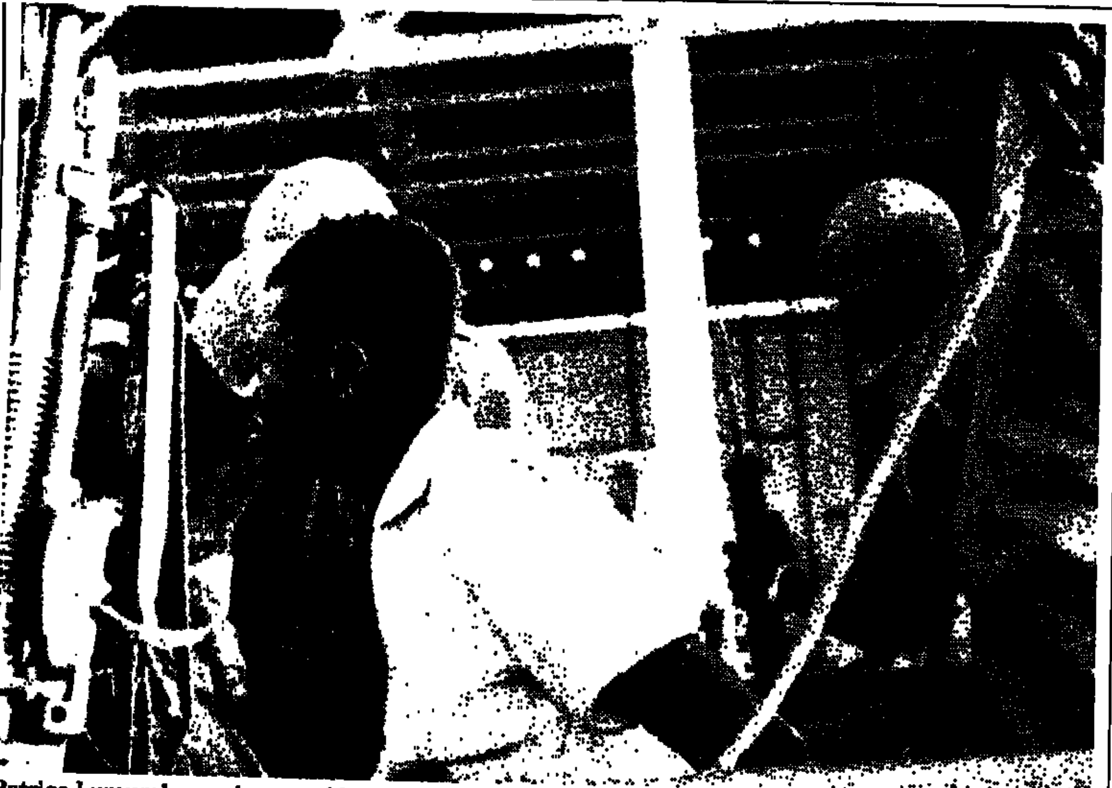
The shadowy forces funded by the likes of Stipe will in reality hasten the emergence of the monstrous army colonel and Western apologist Mobutu Sese Seko, and prompt the attempted secession of the Katanga province that brought United Nations soldiers and mercenaries to Congo. It is against this background that the relationship between Gillespie and Inès begins to break down.

The differences between them become more starkly drawn with every page. His whole being, as a novelist who tries to see all sides of the story, seems at odds with hers as a tunnel-vision activist who happens to write journalism. "I object," he tells himself after a bitter argument with her, "to the implication that those of us who cannot or will not produce in our writing so ostentatious a display of outrage are in some way at fault, that we are at worst collaborators with the enemy, at best heartless, selfish, trivial."

Gillespie, the *catastrofista* as Inès calls him, is one for whom "nothing can be fixed", one for whom "it is always the end". His lack of political commitment stems from having no belief in the benefit of action. Nothing can be fixed, so leave it behind — a view coloured, psychologically, by a chapter explaining his alcoholic father's absenteeism, back in Belfast and Oxford.

Gillespie longs to get the strength of feeling that Inès has into the novel he is writing, describing it as "heartless". Bennett himself is anything but. He shows us plain the anguish of these two — both romantics in their way — and how this dual inauthenticity is forced to the brink by the power of events.

This is a historical novel as well as a love story. But with the news from Congo continuing in the same vein nearly 40 years later, it has a lively currency. It could also be read as a quiet, unprogrammatic allegory for Northern Ireland.


Patrice Lumumba, under guard by troops at Ndjilu airport, Congo, in 1960

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £13 contact CultureShop (see ad on page 29)

Chance would be a fine thing

Steven Poole

Randomness
by Deborah J Bennett
Harvard 238pp £15.50

IMAGINE that you are on trial for murder. The prosecution has acquired a blood sample from you, and claims a DNA match with tissue found at the scene of the crime. The probability of matching these DNA segments at random is put at one in 100 million. This, the prosecution claims, makes it almost certain that you are guilty. But in the absence of any other information, the fact of the DNA match entails a probability of about 98 per cent that you are innocent.

If there is a one in 100 million chance of a random DNA sample matching the one found at the crime scene, then that means there are about 50 people in the world who would provide a match. The prosecutor's sleight of hand is to ask the jury to consider the probability that you match the sample, *given* that you are innocent, the probability of which is indeed 1 in 100 million. But what he should be calculating is the probability that you are innocent, *given* that you match the sample — which so far is 49 in 50. Evidently, a likelihood of guilt put at 1 in 50, before the adducing of any other evidence, is a much better bet for the prosecutor than 1 in 5 billion, but it's no way near as cut-and-dried a piece of evidence of guilt as it first looks.

Clearly, the computation of probabilities is not just an arid mathematical game, especially if you are the person in the dock. As Deborah Bennett shows in her excellent little book on the mathematics of chance, the concept has been controversial for thousands of years. Many people, for a start, have refused to acknowledge the very existence of chance. The Greek atomist Leucippus declared: "Nothing happens at random; everything happens out of reason and by necessity."

The notion that we think events are random only because we are ignorant of their hidden causes was always popular with sceptics (particularly with anti-gambling puritans), and was reanimated in the 17th century by Newton's creation of the laws of physics, which seemed to guarantee an entirely deterministic universe — a theory grandly underwritten by God himself, who was the indispensable *Primum Mobile*. It was only in this century, after the erection of the baroque edifice of quantum mechanics, that chance was reinstated as a fundamental fact about the world.

There had, though, always been a heretical guild of thinkers who acknowledged, or even embraced, chance's existence. One reason for this was the idea that moral goodness could only prove itself by constant exposure to the hazards of luck.

Luck, be a lady: the Roman goddess of chance was the infuriating Fortuna, fickle as the day was long. The "law of averages" is a myth: what randomness means, Bennett explains, is precisely that *any* outcome is equally likely: so, for example, you would have no especial reason to be surprised if you tossed a fair coin and got 100 heads in a row. (And the probability of the next coin being a head would still be exactly 50 per cent.) It is ignorance of such basic facts about probability which leads people to engineer esoteric gambling systems, or to ascribe mystical weight to coincidences.

CLIFFORD HARPER

Yet it seems most people just don't want to believe in blind chance. The I Ching is a book of wisdom in which hexagrams are consulted according to a random sequence of twig manipulations. And rhapsodomancy was rediscovered in the mid-20th century, with the cut-up novel, spatter painting, and the aleatory music of John Cage and his strange acolytes.

Often the only time a person will claim chance as a phenomenon is for the purposes of self-exculpation. We are victims of bad luck, but we make our own good luck. Here is the odd thing about chance: it fades from view as soon as it has acted. A universe of potential collapses instantaneously into a single, hard fact. Open the box, and Schrödinger's cat is either alive or dead. Deborah Bennett's cultured and accessible book goes a long way towards demystifying the science of probability, and thereby offers the reader a useful variety of conceptual tools with which to probe the future and illuminate the present.

Fiction paperbacks

Isobel Montgomery

Native Speaker, by Chang-rae Lee (Granta, £6.99)

NATIVE Speaker tells of Henry Park, the son of a Korean immigrant and, like his Jewish literary ancestors, desperate not to stand out. He is a "false speaker of English" as his estranged wife, a Wasp speech therapist, puts it; an observer trying to catch the nuances to avoid being caught out. Park is a professional spy given the job of tracking a fellow-Korean and would-be mayor, but his search allows him to track down his own identity. Chang-rae Lee's subtle language and controlled narrative pace are what really gives it freshness.

Hangover Square, by Patrick Hamilton (Penguin, £7.99)

A FUNNY, depressing, vivid and mundane chronicle of London pub life before the war. From the early evening hope of the night's first drink to the stale cigarette smoke and unfulfilled promises of last orders, Patrick Hamilton describes the highs and lows of career alcoholism and observes the banality of bar-room philosophising. George Bone is living off a small inheritance in Earls Court's publand and has fallen in love with the slovenly temptress and vicar's daughter, Netta.

A Book of Memories, by Péter Nádas, trs. by Ivan Sanders and Imre Goldstein (Vintage, £6.99)

THIS is a lengthy, digressive, complicated book, but as a slow, poetic, entertaining and haunting narrative of the recent history of central Europe it is worth taking the time to absorb. Nádas creates three intertwining memoires — one of which is a semi-autobiographical account of the Hungarian uprising — which together explore the idea of freedom, political and personal.

She's Leaving Home, by Edwina Currie (Warner Books, £5.99)

GIRL on the verge of womanhood uses intelligence to break free of constraints of provincial, strict religious background, gets first taste of contradictions and compromises of adulthood. A familiar plot, no doubt, but a perfectly serviceable one. What a pity then, that Edwina Currie smothers it with extraneous period detail and the rather inevitable appearance of the Fab Four in 1960s Liverpool and lugubrious political detail to pump it up to blockbuster size. Written with a lighter touch, this could have made a decent novel about coming of age.

Childhood: Glas New Russian Writing No 16, (Glas, £8.99)

THIS anthology is an excellent introduction to contemporary Russian literature. Issue 16 deals with the distorted childhoods by those who grew up under communism. A uniting theme of the selection is the absent father, either away at the front or removed by the secret police. Anatoly Pristavkin's contribution is the one that stands out. "Kukushkin Kids, or The Cuckoos" describes the reality of life in an orphanage where the kids' pasts as children of Enemies of the People have been obliterated.

Big brother is bleeping us

Stefan Collini

The Complete Works of George Orwell
edited by Peter Davison
Secker & Warburg 20 vols £750

IN THE 1980s a refurbished warehouse in Wigan was kitted out, complete with a museum and restaurant, as "The Orwell Wigan Pier", from which visitors could take barge trips on the canal. Rarely can the anti-historical drive of "heritage" have been so fatuously illustrated. Orwell only visited Wigan for a few weeks in 1936, and the title of his subsequent book was anyway an allusion to a local joke. Only the resources of Newspeak could do justice to such absurdity: the whole thing is Doubleplus Unreal.

In some ways Orwell's enduring iconic status is puzzling. As a writer "and "George Orwell", we have to remind ourselves, only existed as a *nom de plume* for Eric Blair), he is a figure of glaring limitations. His novels suffer from their diagrammatic, propagandistic qualities; his plain-mannish literary persona led him to be reductive and philistine; there is something tiresome and self-flattering about his repeated insistence that only the cantankerous non-joiner has any chance of telling the truth; and he is a compendium of intolerant prejudices, represented by his repeated attacks on "pansy intellectuals".

Moreover one might have expected his writing to "date" badly, since it is so tightly bound up with the politics of the 1930s and 1940s, but new generations of readers conscripted by exam syllabuses continue to fall under his spell. He actually subtitled Animal Farm "a fairy story", a detail omitted in many editions, and that description may suggest something about the source of its enduring power, even for readers for whom "communism" is something to be looked up in the notes.

We also tend, in this post-cold war world, to write off Orwell's predictions of creeping totalitarianism as alarmist pessimism, but it is worth remembering that he was at least as preoccupied by the insidious managerialism and deadening consumerism of liberal societies. For example, in a sentence that was written 50 years ago, Orwell imagined another "implausible" feature of life in Airstrip One: "The Lottery, with its weekly pay-out of enormous prizes, was the one public event to which the proles paid serious attention." Nah, it'll never happen.

Certainly, it was one of Orwell's strengths, as well as the source of some of his obvious limitations, that he was always truculently "off-message". We don't find it very difficult to imagine what he might have said about Britain in the age of another Mr Blair. He would surely have had no difficulty in identifying the whereabouts of the Ministry of Truth: O'Brien is now Minister without Portfolio, and "Big Brother is bleeping you".

The great difficulty with Orwell is not to allow the slag-heaps of glibness that result from the political, commercial and curricular appropriations of him to obscure the enduring qualities of the courageous, driven man who recognised, in a characteristically plain phrase, that he had "a facility with words and a power of facing unpleasant facts". Part of the value of comprehensive scholarly editions of major writers lies in the way they help us to confront the icon, worn smooth by repeated careless handling, with the unevenness and sheer variousness of the actual writer's achievement. Peter Davison's long-awaited edition of "the complete Orwell" serves this purpose marvellously well.

Volumes 1 to 9, containing textually corrected editions of Orwell's nine books, were published in 1986. After many difficulties and delays, volumes 10 to 20, containing the essays, journalism, letters and much else besides, have now triumphantly appeared. The 11 volumes of miscellaneous material contain 3,737 separate items, plus several more that only came to light when this edition was already at the proof stage. There is some new, and a vast amount of newly accessible, material here which it will take scholars some years to digest.

There is an irresistible madness about a "complete works" edition on this scale; it yields pleasures that fall somewhere between those of dipping into Wisden and those of poking around in a dead aunt's attic.

Every item is impeccably presented and authoritatively annotated; there is a wealth of additional commentary. The cumulative index to the last 11 volumes runs to 187 closely-packed pages. The edition more than once refers, in wry self-defence, to the description of the character in 1984 who "was engaged in producing garbled versions — definitive texts, they were called".

This book is available at the special price of £650 from CultureShop (see below. Contact them for p&p quotes)

Crotch and crotchets and all

Eric Korn

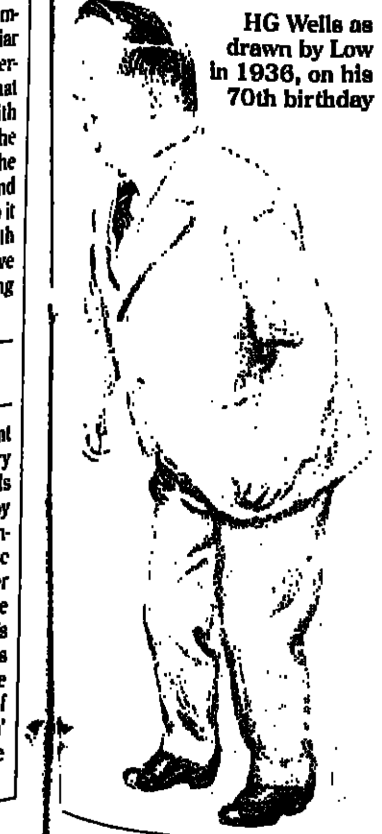
The Correspondence of H G Wells
edited by David C Smith
Pickering & Chatto 4 vols £275

"*THE* intelligent tourist," said the sign in the holiday camp when near Lake Como, "leaves no trace of his passage." It has a ...ny, Dantean ring. The paperless ...e, the unexamined life ...

Will there be letters ever again? ...ssive collections like these four ...y volumes of H G Wells: letters ...editors, lovers, grocers, mothers, ...ters to agents, Russian or literary, ...political or theological enemies, ...ex-lovers and ex-lovers who don't ...t know it. When craftily edited, they give us the whole man, not just the fine eyes and impressive forehead, but crotch and crotchets, thoughts and warts and all.

Wells illuminated letters to favoured correspondents with his own "picshuas": wonderfully fluent, if not actually talented, cartoons of anonymous stick-people, toffs in top hats, or (most often) himself. Many are reproduced here. You see the best and worst of Wells in these letters when he writes — to newspapers, to opponents or false disciples — against misrepresentation of his ideas. As he grew older and more celebrated, the righteous anger turned to defensiveness. Threatening litigation became a hobby and then a habit and then an addiction: people who had spoken of him admiringly but imprecisely were surprised to get demands for apologies.

This splendidly rich collection demonstrates Wells's vivacity and diversity — and his enviable range of lovers. He was a serial bigamist, always returning to patient, unsportive Jane: "I want a healthy woman handy to steady my nerves and leave my mind free for real things. I love you very warmly". When she was dying all his other lovers became trivial: "My inmost heart is yours." As for politics, he was internationalist and anti-nationalist to his fingerprints, and his anti-Zionism ("one instance of a worldwide nuisance") was, then and now, misinterpreted: "Largely through my own irritability and tactlessness, I have aroused the resentment of Jews who are essentially at one with me in their desire for a sane equalitarian world order".


HG Wells as drawn by Low in 1936, on his 70th birthday

But there's an ill-tempered trip to the United States in 1940, when he was obliged to share his cabin with "a nice little old Italian and (thank God) not Jews". The editor, David Smith, notes with embarrassment: "The only overt anti-Jewish remark I have seen." Wells struggled through the war, his body failing, quarrelling with a mad world, sycamores, flying bombs, and a titled neighbour with an illegal Salvation Army signboard. "I get more and more anarchistic and ultraleft as I grow older," he wrote to Bertrand Russell in one of his last letters.

Smith has done a fine, tactful and prodigiously industrious job. Wells's handwriting is tiny and difficult at the best of times: under stress it resembles the electro-encephalograph of a meditating brain. The footnotes are modest and helpful, the indexing sound. And through the pages Wells comes multifariously, outrageously, seductively and toweringly alive.


Look what's happening to the neighbourhood: raptors in Fifth Avenue

First we take Manhattan

Daniel Butler

Red Tails in Love:
A Wildlife Drama in Central Park
by Marie Winn
Bloomsbury 307pp £13.99

IN SPITE of a nauseatingly anthropomorphic title, Marie Winn's study of New York's first breeding pair of red tail buzzards makes fascinating reading. The bare facts are remarkable enough. Red tails are powerful raptors with four-foot wingspans, which normally live on small rodents in open country, hunting by soaring on thermals.

The concrete jungle would therefore seem the last place where one would choose to set up home. There are relatively few rodents, still fewer open spaces, and the large trees in which it builds its nest are almost entirely absent. In spite of these drawbacks, the process of colonisation seems to have begun. Not only have these relatively slow-moving and unmanoeuvrable raptors switched from a diet of mice to pigeons, but they have paired up, built a nest and raised three families in the heart of New York.

That they have succeeded is thanks to the wildlife oasis of Central Park, 843 acres of mixed habitat set in the middle of Manhattan. Here the red tails make a living ambushing pigeons from the cover of trees, bolstering this unusual food source with the Park's rat and squirrel populations. The pair have also had to abandon their natural nesting instincts in order to score their first breeding success (in fact, although the male has remained constant, there have been three females). Under normal conditions, red tails pick a tall tree for a nursery, but the first two attempts to build nests in the park failed from disturbance — both human and crow. It was only when the pair switched to a Fifth Avenue window ledge, four floors above Mary Tyler Moore's flat, that they managed to fledge young.

If Winn's book has a fault it is that tendency to the anthropomorphic. Similarly, there is a strong whiff of sentimentalism. The reactions of the watchers to news of the death of the female hawk, their struggles to see rat poison outlawed and attempts to prevent window-cleaners disturbing the incubating birds all seem overblown. But this book is more of a sociological study of urban man's relationship with the natural environment than it is about the wildlife itself, so there are amusing anecdotes, like the time the assembled binocular-wielding hawk-watchers broke off to observe bigger game: Woody Allen and Soon-Yi Previn appearing on their terrace.

There is a wealth of well-observed behavioural detail. As the watchers become increasingly obsessed, they make genuine scientific discoveries — such as the first comprehensive census of migrants seen in the Park (including golden eagles, vultures and loons). They also discover that the female red tail is blind in one eye, yet can hunt and breed successfully — confounding many wildlife experts who believe such handicaps to be a death sentence in the wild.

Kestrels, sparrowhawks, tawny and little owls are already regular features in most British towns. Peregrine falcons are soon to join them as Britain's population reaches saturation point. With virtually every cliff nest site and hunting range occupied, cities — with their abundant tower blocks and endless pigeons — are an obvious alternative.

With the possible additions of goshawk and barn owl, the trend is likely to end here, however. Most raptors are too specialised to adapt to urban life. But were goshawks to start slaughtering pigeons, ducks and grey squirrels across suburban parks and gardens in Britain, a storm of protest would be the inevitable result.

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Vanishing tricks and vertigo

Paul Evans

THERE was a moment, and a brief one at that, when the mist cleared and the Matterhorn was visible. The highest peak in Britain is Scotland's Ben Nevis at 1,343m, but it is a pimple compared with the Matterhorn, at 4,478m. At the head of the Val d'Anniviers, a Y-shaped tributary valley of the Rhone, is the Weisshorn. Although lesser known it is even higher at 4,505m and it jostles with other mountains to form a crown of peaks at a similar altitude.

Such a vastness of crags with snow ridges, colossal glaciers and cloud snagging peaks is humbling and hard to adjust to. To be able to wander in them and head above the tree line to that rarefied Alpine world is astounding.

The story goes that an old farmer was cutting his hay meadow — these meadows contain a profusion of wildflowers that gardeners elsewhere would kill for — when a couple of Belgian tourists stopped for a chat. When told that only 200 people lived in the farmer's village, the tourists asked if this was a problem because it must mean that the village had a high proportion of inbred idiots. To which the farmer replied, "Only in July and August". For us lowlanders, rubbernecking at the mountaintops, trudging red-faced up the trails and cooing over wildflowers, the mountains inspire a sort of divine idiocy that used to be called the Sublime.

The Chemin des Planetes is a walk that begins at the observatory high above St Luc and wanders between sculptures that evoke the planets. As this leads into increasingly wilder mountainside, ragged clouds swoop down from 4,000m peaks beyond and you begin to wonder which planet you're meant to be on. A pair of eagles cruise over the ridge without effort. Powered by an awesome will, they hold the breeze in the thin mountain air and their commanding presence anchors the delirious vertigo of this high Alpine world.



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Unlike the limestone in other parts of the Alps, these rocks are an acidic mica-schist and so the flora is quite different. It is as if the mountain builders had dumped the smallest bits on top and then disappeared without finishing the job. Here, in the silvery rubble not long ago covered in snow, the gems of the Alpine flora are now visible: houseleeks, saxifrages, rock jasmine, primulas.

The track stumbles across rocky montane heaths of rhododendron and lingering alpenrose still in flower before swinging down into the high Alpine pastures. On the descent towards Zinal, each wet flash, streamside and drier ridge holds a unique ecological assembly. There are masses of sulphur-yellow Alpine pasque-flowers (the calcareous version is white), dark purple pansies, black and scarlet vanilla-scented orchids, unfeasibly blue gentians and thousands upon thousands of early-purple orchids.

The effect is as mind-blowing as the views across this incredible valley, which, when wet clouds dash a quick downpour, leave you wrapped in the wildest of breathtaking gardens. In a moment of rain, in the midst of all these flowers, a moonwort — the strange fern that is supposed to grant invisibility to its finder — makes an appearance. And it does. Just for a moment it seems that the Sublime is transcended and, like the Matterhorn invisible inside its cloud, I am locked into the presence of the mountain fastness through the existence of this tiny living thing.

Chess Leonard Barden

DORTMUND SPARKASSEN, the 10-man tournament in Germany, ended this month in a shared victory for Peter Svidler, Michael Adams and Vladimir Kramnik, who all scored six points.

V Kramnik v P Svidler

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 Nc6 9 Be3 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa5+ The Exchange Grunfeld 4 cxd5 is popular at present, but here most interest is in 0-0 11 0-0 Bg4 12 f3 Na5.

11 Bd2 Qd8 Black can also try 11 . . . Qa3 with the trap 12 Rb1 0-0 13 d5 Ne5 14 Bb4 Qf3! though White does better to continue as in the game.

12 d5 Ne5 13 Bc3 0-0 14 Bb3 Qb6 15 f4 Ng4 16 Bd4 Qa5+ Heading for a difficult endgame; Bxd4 17 Qxd4 e5! may be better. **17 Qd2 Qxd2+ 18 Kxd2 e5 19 h3!** Smart. White concedes a passed pawn, but his own central duo matter more. **exd4 20 hxg4 g5** This doesn't help, so try d3 21 Nc3 Bxg4 keeping active bishops. **21 g3 Bxg4 22 e5 Bxe2 23 Kxe2 Rfc8 24 Rad1 Rc3 25 Rd3!** Calm play. 25 Rxd4? Rxg3 would destroy White's impressive pawn chain.

Rac8? Running into a fatal fork; he could still try Bf8 26 d6 Kg7 27 f5 f6 28 exf6+ Kh8. **26 d6 b5 27 Rxc3 dxc3 28 e6! Kf8 29 e7+ Ke8 30 Bxf7+! Resigns.** If Kxf7 31 d7 wins.

Meanwhile Erik van den Doel, aged 19, won the recent Agency tournament, scoring his second GM norm and winning the fastest game.

E van den Doel v D Gormally

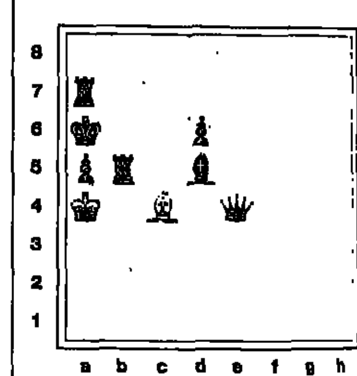
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 e5 7 Nf3 Qc7 8 Be2 Be7 9 a4 0-0 10 0-0 Nbd7 11 Nd2 b6 12 Bc4 Bb7 13 Ba2 Bc6 14 Qe2 h6? 15 Rfd1 Rfd8?? 16 Qc4 Resigns. White wins a piece by Qxf7+ or Nd5.

Nigel Short and Matthew Sadler will be the top seeds in the Smith & Williamson British championship, starting on July 27. Anyone can enter for the British title via regional heats. This year's youngest finalist, Craig Hanley, is aged 14 and qualified at Lancashire's Heywood Open. A Heywood game shows the active style that works best in weekend chess:

A Dyce v B Hague

1 e4 Nf6 2 d3 e5 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 Be2 Bc5 5 0-0 0-0 6 c3 d5 7 Nbd2 dxe4 8 dxe4 Bg4 9 Qc2 Nh5 10 Re1 Nf4 11 Bf1 Qf6 12 b4 Bb6 13 a4 a6 14 Bb2 Rad8 15 Rad1 Nh3+! 16 gxh3 Rxd2 17 Qxd2 Bxf3 18 h4 Qxh4 19 h3 Qg3+ 20 Resigns.

No 2532



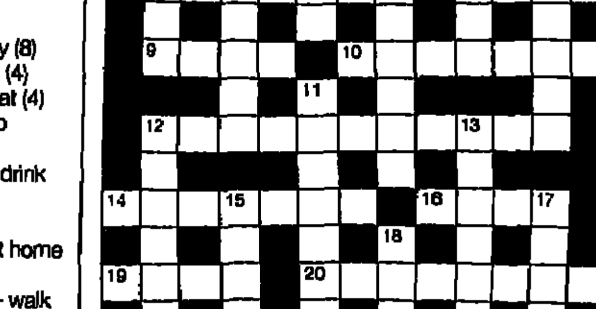
Black moves first and helps White mate in five moves (by M Prcic, The Problemist 1998). Another tough puzzle to measure your skills against Britain's best. Both sides co-operate so that after five black and five white moves, the final white move is checkmate. There's just a single forced line of play, but of 26 competitors who attempted this at the 1998 British Solving Championship, only reigning world champion Jonathan Mestel and two others succeeded within the allotted 25 minutes.

No 2531: 1 Ra1! If Nc6 2 Bd3 mate or Nc4 2 Bd7. If Nb6 2 cxb6 or Nc3 2 Rxc3 and mates next move as before. So Black must try 1 . . . Nxc5 2 Ra5! either N moves 3 Bd7/d3 mate as the other N is pinned.

Quick crossword no. 427

Across

1 Paid for by the management (2,3,5)
7 Magnetic personality (8)
8 Small bird (4)
9 Quits — flat (4)
10 Right — to punish (7)
12 Ban — of drink in US (11)
14 Rust (7)
16 Drive point home (4)
19 Not stiff — walk stiffly (4)
20 Haughty (8)
21 One-sided (10)



Down

1 Yellow or red pigment (5)
2 Submarine weapon (7)
3 Comfort (4)
4 Musical composition (eg Messiah) (8)
5 Person mending — a pipe? (5)
6 Church official (6)
11 Unexpected piece of fortune (8)
12 Gain (6)
13 Whole number (7)
15 Mature (5)
17 Trite (5)
18 Sort of saw — pine (4)

Last week's solution

PRINCEREGENT
S E E X X R O
HALVE CHATEAU
E A D E M C R
PITY DEVIATED
H E C D N E
ENDURE RELIEF
R E C D N R
DRAMATIC IDEA
S M T N O U N
PROVIDE RELIC
I N O M I G E
ELGINMARBLES

Bridge Zia Mahmood

PORT CHESTER, New York, October 1981. In the last qualifying round for the Bermuda Bowl, the world championship, Great Britain meet Argentina. Britain require only a draw to progress to the semi-final stages, but Argentina must win the match.

With a single board left to play, the score is 73 IMPs to 72 in Argentina's favour — but because the match will ultimately be scored by Victory Points, this counts as a draw. The final deal is placed on the table. North-South vulnerable, dealer South:

North
♠ AJ742
♥ J9652
♦ None
♣ A84

West
♠ 106
♥ 1074
♦ AQ87642
♣ 5

East
♠ KQ53
♥ KQ83
♦ 1095
♣ KQ

South
♠ 98
♥ A
♦ KJ3
♣ J1097632

In the Closed Room, this is the bidding:

South	West	North	East
Rose	Attaguile	Sheehan	Santamarina
Pass	Pass	1♠	Dble
2♣	2♦	3♣	Pass
5♣	5♦	Dble	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Robert Sheehan opened with a light one spade in third position, then did well to support Irving Rose's clubs at his second turn. Attaguile, West, who had underbid his hand considerably with two diamonds at his first opportunity, was now forced into a unilateral decision.

With the match so close, he opted to take out insurance against an enemy vulnerable game by sacrificing in five diamonds.

Sheehan led the ace of spades and a second spade, so declarer was able to discard his losing heart on a club later in the play and concede 300.

This would be a good result if five clubs could be made — but the big question was, could it?

At the other table, the auction was the following:

South	West	North	East
Scanavino	Hackett	Camberos	Collings
Pass	1♦(1)	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass(2)	2♥	Pass
3♣	3♦	4♣	Pass
5♣	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Any 0-8 point hand or any strong hand — the dreaded Walpurgis Diamond. (2) 0-8 points.

The opening lead was vital here. If Paul Hackett led a trump, and John Collings played low when declarer led a heart towards the singleton ace, five clubs doubled was doomed. But Hackett led the 10 of spades to the jack and queen. Collings switched to trumps, but too late — declarer was able to establish dummy's fifth spade for a vital discard, and five clubs doubled was made for a score of 750 and a 10 IMP gain to Argentina.

David Batty can take heart. He is not the only Englishman to lose a crucial match to Argentina by missing a penalty! ©

In the July 5 column, South's hand should have been: ♠Q 3; ♥Q 3; ♦9 4 2; ♣A K 6 5 3 2. Our apologies

Cricket Benson & Hedges Cup final: Essex v Leicester

Fond farewell for irresistible Essex

David Hopps at Lord's

THIS match may not have provided the classic conclusion the sponsors wanted to the last Benson & Hedges Cup competition but there was certainly a startling farewell as Essex pulled off the most comprehensive victory witnessed at Lord's in 36 years of domestic one-day finals last Sunday.

It took Essex nearly two days to complete a victory in a bedraggled final that for many ghastly hours looked bound to be settled by a shoot-out, but in all other respects Leicestershire, who had won the toss, were routed. They were dismissed for 76, the lowest total in any one-day final, and the margin of 192 runs was also unsurpassed.

Essex needed only 27.4 overs to brush aside Leicestershire. The rain that began last Saturday, with Essex having established a bridgehead of 268 for seven, relented to allow a start by 3.25pm. The sagacious and nippy new-ball bowling of Mark Ilott and Ashley Cowan did the rest.

Rain-disrupted matches can disturb the mind-set of the best counties, but Leicestershire, who entered the final as the only county still in contention for all four domestic competitions, were pained at succumbing so rapidly, however responsive the conditions were to seam and swing.

A night's reflection had wormed into the Leicestershire psyche. To win over 50 overs they required a record total for a side batting second in 27 years of B&H finals. As soon as it became clear that the conditions of Saturday would be replicated, they suspected that their chances were minimal.

It had been far easier as the rain tippled down to imagine the ways they might fiddle an unmerited victory: a shoot-out in front of the pavilion to a backdrop of MCC umbrellas and hunched photographers or a steal in an abbreviated match decided by the arithmetical complexity of the Duckworth-Lewis method.

The English Cricket Board's chief executive Tim Lamb had staunchly pronounced before lunch that this might be the day that Duckworth-Lewis came of age. Fortunately we were all spared the awful experience, as even Leicestershire's captain Chris Lewis agreed. "This is how it should have been settled, with a proper game of cricket," he said. "We just didn't do ourselves justice with the ball or the bat."

Leicestershire's agitation soon made the lurking threat of Duckworth-Lewis an irrelevance. By the ninth over they were 17 for four and Ilott and Cowan had displayed a dexterity far in excess of anything produced by the rival attack 24 hours earlier.

Cowan's gawky run, guileless expression and summer of back trouble do not automatically identify him as the country's most clinical new-ball bowler, but he had flourished from the Nursery End in Essex's quarter-final victory against Middlesex, and he did so again here.



Mark Ilot celebrates Phil Simmons's dismissal PHOTO: LAWRENCE GRIFFITHS

Five exploratory overs had passed before Cowan had Iain Sutcliffe and Ben Smith caught off successive balls at second slip. When Darren Maddy became his third victim — the record run-maker in any B&H season limited to five singles in 14 overs — Leicestershire were 31 for six.

Ilott had done the rest of the damage. Had the left-armer swung the ball more frequently, he would have won a shoal of England caps. Here he swung it as he must do in his dreams. Phil Simmons was bowled as his wanton drive completed a miserable match; Vince Wells and Aftab Habib followed to huge in-duckers. The match finished with Ronnie Irani dashing in like a world-beater.

The Gold Award, rightly, had been earned on Saturday. Paul Prichard's 92, from 113 balls, for Essex was the sparkiest of innings from a captain who was playing his first match in the competition this season after shin splints.

Nasser Hussain was also instrumental in Essex achieving the third highest total in 27 years of Benson finals, a feat which realistically should not have been within their compass. Bellicosity is at the heart of all Hussain's finest one-day innings and he had looked fit to sling all-comers before Lewis caused him to miss-pull to midwicket on 88.

Motor Racing

Schumacher shines in rain

Alan Henry at Silverstone

MICHAEL SCHUMACHER scored his first British Grand Prix victory last Sunday in atrocious conditions and highly controversial circumstances which bordered on the bizarre.

Having won a remarkable battle with Mika Hakkinen's McLaren on a track surface intermittently assailed by torrential rain, the German brought his Ferrari F300 into the pit-lane to take a 10-second stop-go penalty after it had passed the chequered flag.

It was the culmination of a sequence of events which meant the race ended in a state of considerable tension and bad feeling, with McLaren lodging an official protest over the result and the way the matter was handled. But after an hour's deliberation the FIA stewards dismissed the protest.

McLaren claimed that Schumacher had passed the Benetton of Alexander Wurz on lap 43 of the 60-lap race while the field was queueing behind the safety car, which had been deployed to slow the race at the height of the downpour.

For this transgression the German was handed a stop-go penalty but the stewards decided that this should be added to his race time rather than bringing him into the pits for a more time-consuming delay. However, according to the rules, adding 10 seconds to the elapsed race time can be applied only if the race is within 12 laps of the finish, and that was not the case here.

This time, before the safety car went out, Hakkinen's McLaren-Mercedes had built up a 38-second lead over Schumacher, only to see it dissipated as the field slowed to a comparative crawl and Schumacher fell into line behind Giancarlo Fisichella's Benetton and Toranosuke Takagi's Tyrrell in the queue behind the silver McLaren.

Two laps before the safety car emerged, Hakkinen had spun wildly across the grass and a gravel trap on the outside of Bridge corner but managed to regain control and rejoin the circuit beyond the next corner.

After a five-lap crawl the pack was unleashed again and Schumacher moved in for the kill. With his nose section damaged by that spin across the grass, Hakkinen was struggling with a handling imbalance which prevented him fending off the German's Ferrari, which surged into the lead on lap 51.

It left Schumacher trailing the championship leader Hakkinen by only two points, but for David Coulthard the race was a disaster, his title hopes disappearing when he spun out of second place in the downpour.

Similar errors put paid to the hopes of his fellow Britons Damon Hill and Johnny Herbert, both of whom had started with high hopes of top-six finishes. Hill's failure was particularly disappointing. Having qualified seventh, he ran as high as eighth in the opening stages, only to spin off on lap 14.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Boardman crashes out of Tour contention

BRITAIN'S Chris Boardman saw his hopes of winning the Tour de France disappear during the second stage after an incident in the peloton left him stunned at the side of the road.

Boardman sustained cuts to his face and was taken to hospital for a precautionary brain scan, and later one of the Tour doctors, Gerard Forte, announced he was withdrawing the rider from the event because he had no recollection of the incident.

Jean-Marie Leblanc, the Tour's director general, said: "Boardman was following his team-mate Frederic Moncassin when his front wheel hit Moncassin's back wheel. He was forced into the side of the road and fell, hitting his head against a wooden post."

In the race, which began in Ireland last weekend because the start clashed with the climax of the football World Cup, Boardman won the prologue in Dublin while the first stage of 112 miles through Wicklow Hills went to the Belgian national champion Tom Steels. Stage two, from Enniscorthy, was claimed by Jan Svorada of the Czech Republic.

TWO British athletes caused a major upset when they beat the supposedly invincible Michael Johnson of the United States into third place in the 400 metres in Oslo's famed Bislett Stadium. Mark Richardson produced possibly the most memorable performance ever seen by a British quarter-miler when he crossed the line first in 44.37sec with team-mate Iwan Thomas in second place. Johnson, who appeared shell-shocked after the race, said at a press conference later: "It was an OK race. I don't like to lose but you have to take the good with the bad."

A COOL $1.7 million in eight days — that's the prospect facing Lee Westwood, the 25-year-old golfer from Worksop, Nottinghamshire, as he prepared for the Open at Royal Birkdale. His last round of 70 in the Standard Life Loch Lomond tournament gave him an eight-under total of 276, four ahead of a group comprising Dennis Edlund, Ian Woosnam, Eduardo Romerso, Robert Allenby and David Howell.



Westwood: accepts plaudits

The victory earned Westwood $230,000 and Standard Life has offered a $1 million bonus to anyone who wins the event and then goes on to complete the double in the Open. With a purse of nearly $500,000 at Birkdale, success there could give his bank balance an enormous boost. "That would be very nice," he said. "But I don't think I'll worry too much about the bonus. Winning the Claret Jug means more to me than money."

HOLDERS Essex were knocked out of the NatWest Trophy in the second round by Hampshire at Southampton. Only five balls into the match, the visitors found themselves reeling at three for two, with the cream of the batting, captain Paul Prichard, Nasser Hussain and Stuart Law, back in the pavilion.

They managed to reach 129, thanks to a gritty 47 by Danny Law and 26 extras. Hampshire achieved their target with the loss of seven wickets. Cardigan Conner, the 37-year-old West Indian seamer, was Hampshire's man of the match, with bowling figures of four for 13. In the quarter-finals, Hampshire will meet Middlesex, who defeated Durham (240-8) by two wickets.

Scotland, who notched their maiden NatWest victory when they knocked out Worcestershire in the opening round, were beaten by Derbyshire. Dominic Cork's team bowled them out for a paltry 113 and then overhauled the total with the loss of four wickets. Derbyshire's opponents in the last eight will be Surrey (215), who beat Gloucestershire by 52 runs. In the other two quarter-final games, Leicestershire, the only side never to have won the NatWest Trophy, will meet Warwickshire, while Lancashire take on Nottinghamshire.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR'S striker David Ginola assumed the role left vacant by the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in the campaign to ban land-mines. The exquisitely maned former French footballer of the year will be the figurehead in the International Red Cross's fight to bring an end to the use of such weapons. Ginola plans to visit mine-affected countries.

MARK HUGHES turned his back on Chelsea's European challenge when he agreed a three-year contract with Southampton. The 34-year-old former Welsh and Manchester United player signed for the Saints last Saturday for a fee of £500,000 to become Dave Jones's fifth recruit in 10 days.

Gary Pallister meanwhile rejoined Middlesbrough for £2.5 million after spending nine years at Manchester United. The 33-year-old former England centre-back has signed a three-year deal with the Northeast club. England international Ian Wright is to join West Ham from Arsenal.